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PLUS A DOOMLORD DIES! AND MAX WANTS TO BE A SPY!

PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1

1955 STRATFORD-UPON-AVON ... IRVING THESPIUS, SHAKESPEARIAN ACTOR . . .
ALAS, POOR YORICK— I KNEW HIM, HORATIO. A FELLOW OF INFINITE JEST . . .

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PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

1958 PARIS — THE FESTIVAL OF MAGIC . . . IRVING THESPIUS, MASTER OF MYSTERY!
1959 NIAGARA FALLS . . . THE GREAT THESPIUS, WIRE-WALKER!

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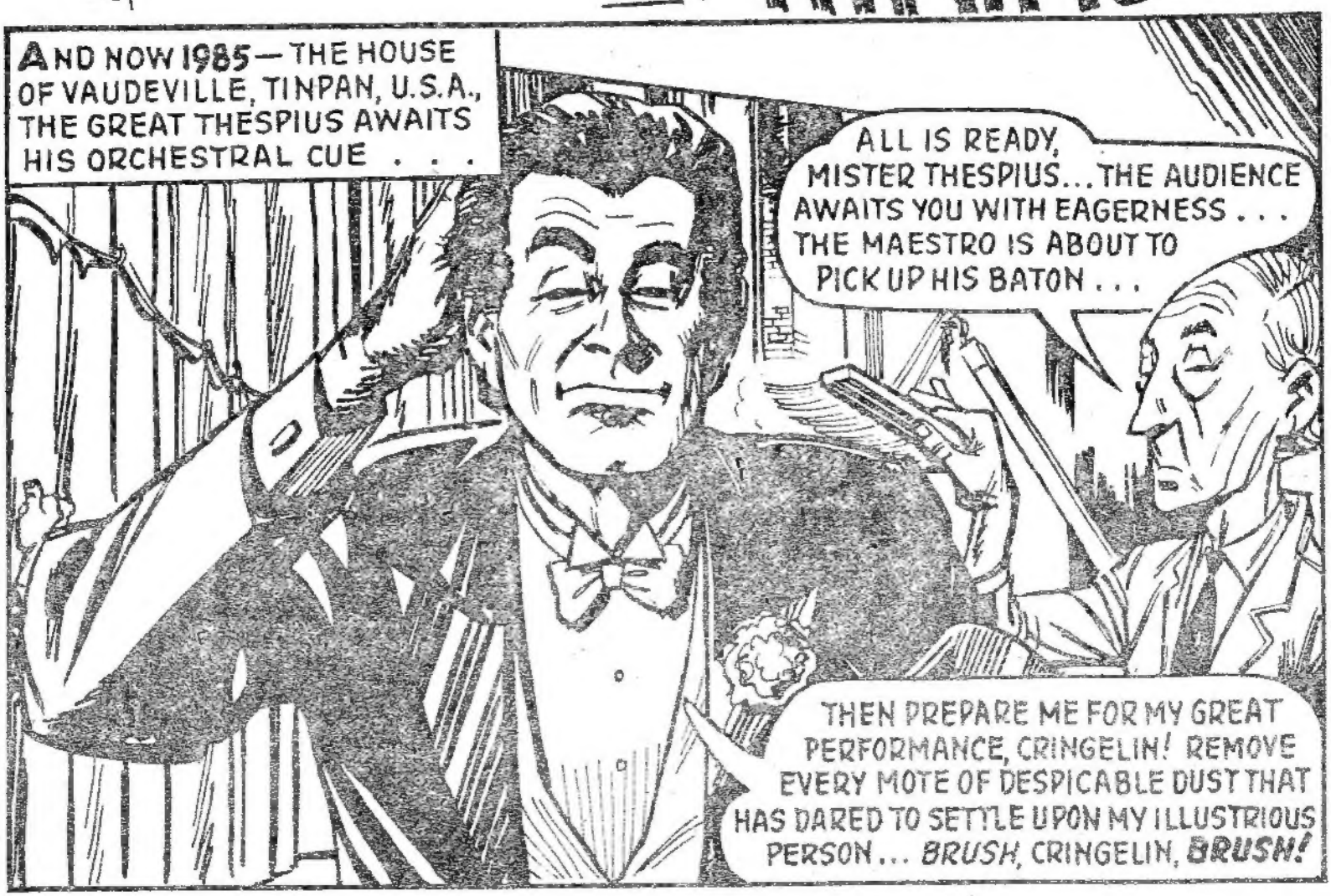
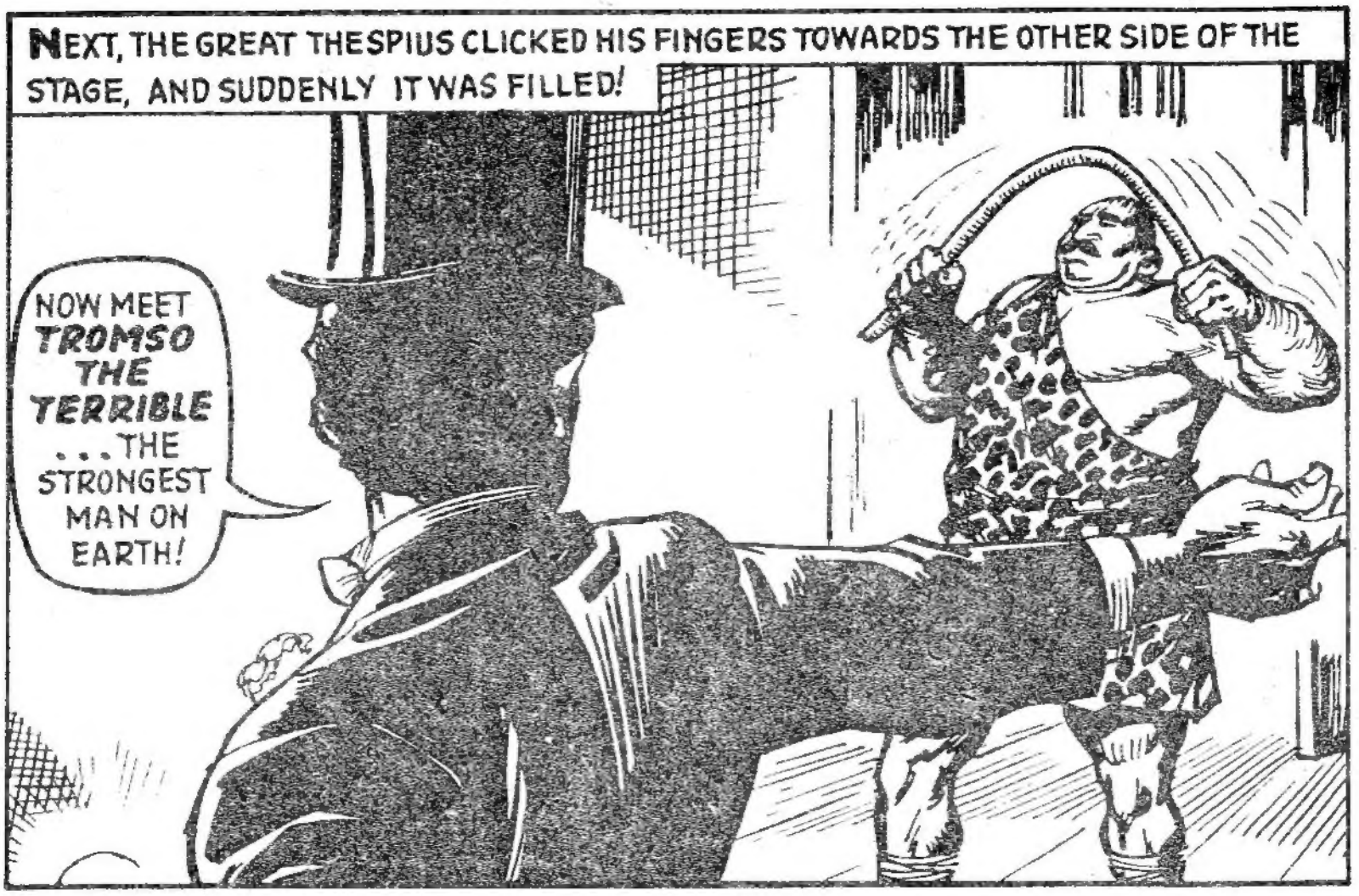
THESPIUS

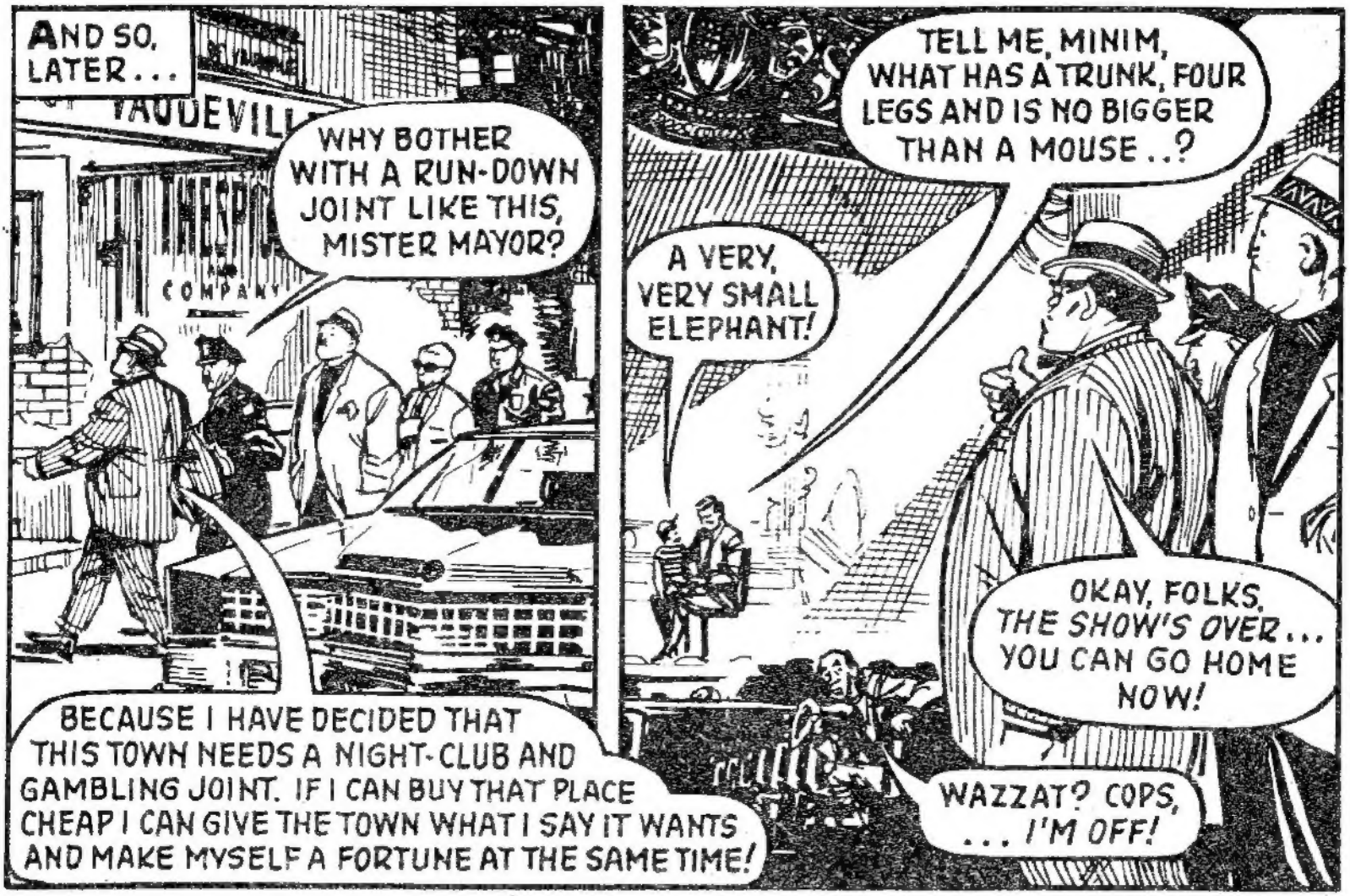

AND NOW 1985 — THE HOUSE OF VAUDEVILLE, TINPAN, U.S.A., THE GREAT THESPIUS AWAITS HIS ORCHESTRAL CUE . . .
ALL IS READY, MISTER THESPIUS... THE AUDIENCE AWAITS YOU WITH EAGERNESS . . . THE MAESTRO IS ABOUT TO PICK UP HIS BATON . . .
THEN PREPARE ME FOR MY GREAT PERFORMANCE, CRINGELIN! REMOVE EVERY MOTE OF DESPICABLE DUST THAT HAS DARED TO SETTLE UPON MY ILLUSTRIOUS PERSON... BRUSH, CRINGELIN, BRUSH!

IN FACT THERE WAS HARDLY ANY APPLAUSE AT ALL, FOR IN THIS DAY AND AGE THE CITIZENS OF TINPAN CARED LITTLE FOR THE SENSATION OF THE 'SIXTIES'!
. . . AND NOW TO INTRODUCE THE OTHER STARS OF MY SPECTACULAR SHOW . . .!
I WISH WE'D GONE TO THE DRIVE-IN MOVIE!
THE GREAT THESPIUS GESTURED AT THE EMPTY STAGE. THERE WAS A CLICK OF LIGHT . . . AND IT WAS NO LONGER EMPTY!
FIRST . . . MEET THE GREATEST VENTRILOQUIST ACT EVER . . . CHARLIE WOOD AND MINIM!
OO! WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?


NEXT, THE GREAT THESPIUS CLICKED HIS FINGERS TOWARDS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE, AND SUDDENLY IT WAS FILLED!
NOW MEET TROMSO THE TERRIBLE ... THE STRONGEST MAN ON EARTH!

MEANWHILE, IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE ACROSS TOWN . . .
I LIKE MY OWN WAY IN EVERYTHING, PIGEON! AND I WANT THAT YOU GO OUT AND BUY THE VAUDEVILLE HOUSE, DOWN TOWN! SO HAVE YOU DONE IT?
ON MY WORD, I'VE TRIED, MAYOR VITCH, I'VE TRIED... BUT THAT CRUMMY ACTOR WON'T SELL!

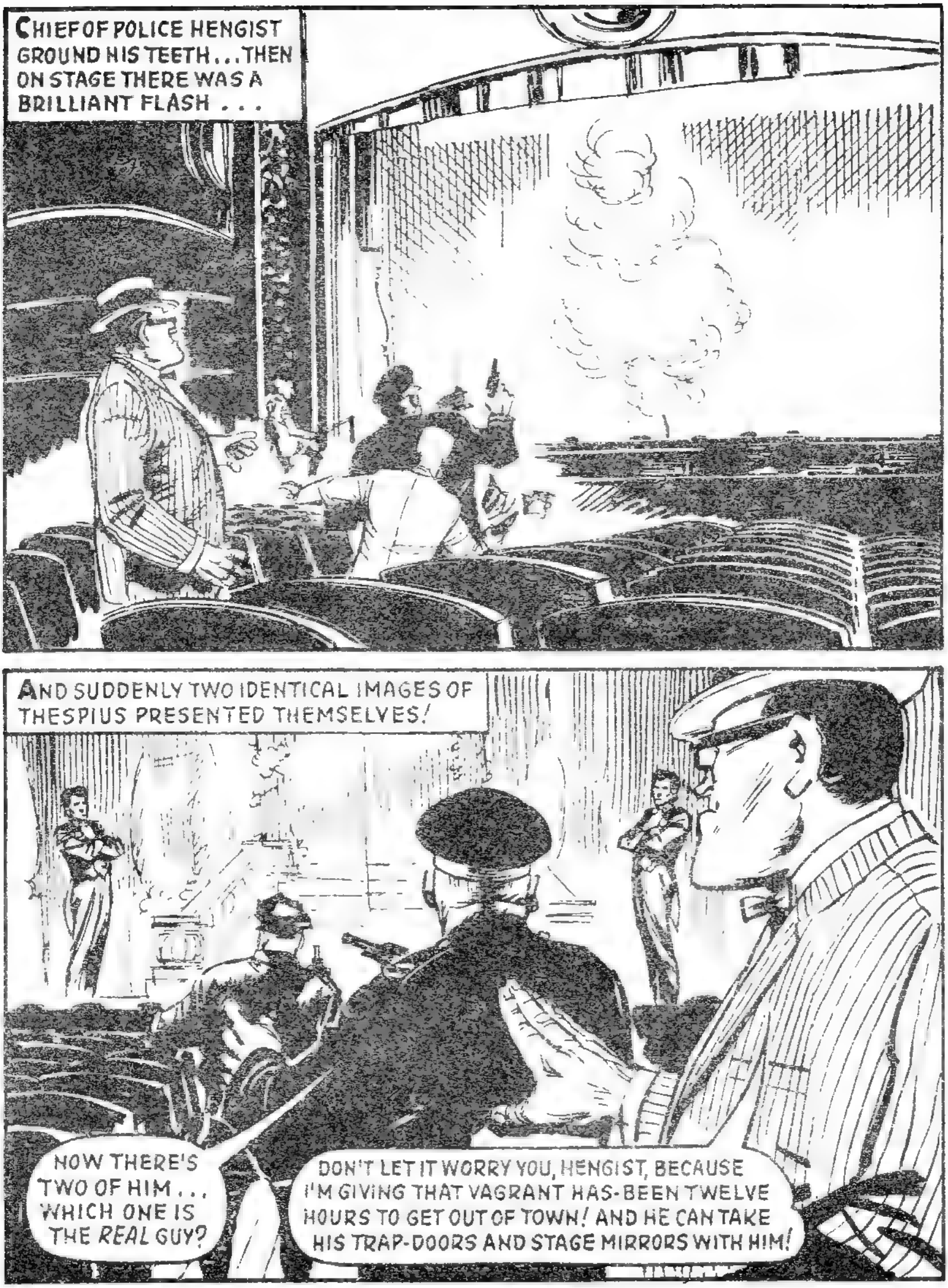
OKAY, PIGEON, YOU'VE ASKED HIM YOUR WAY, NICELY... NOW I'LL HANDLE IRVING THESPIUS MY WAY... NOT SO NICELY! TELL POLICE CHIEF HENGIST I WANT HIM!
YES, SIR!

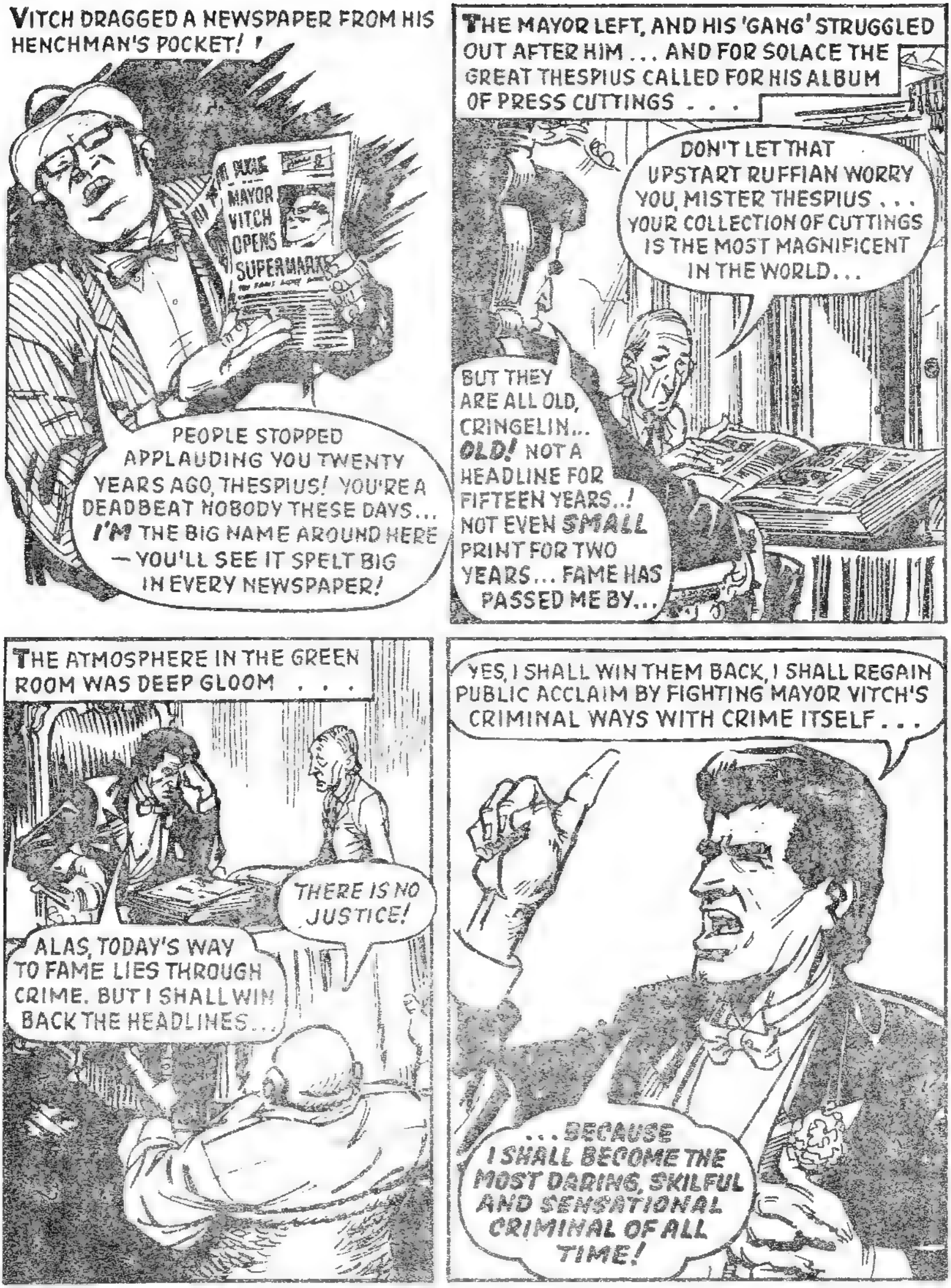

AND SO, LATER...
WHY BOTHER WITH A RUN-DOWN JOINT LIKE THIS, MISTER MAYOR?
BECAUSE I HAVE DECIDED THAT THIS TOWN NEEDS A NIGHT-CLUB AND GAMBLING JOINT. IF I CAN BUY THAT PLACE CHEAP I CAN GIVE THE TOWN WHAT I SAY IT WANTS AND MAKE MYSELF A FORTUNE AT THE SAME TIME!
TELL ME, MINIM, WHAT HAS A TRUNK, FOUR LEGS AND IS NO BIGGER THAN A MOUSE..?
A VERY, VERY SMALL ELEPHANT!
OKAY, FOLKS, THE SHOW'S OVER... YOU CAN GO HOME NOW!
WAZZAT? COPS, ... I'M OFF!

COME ALONG, LADY! WE DON'T WANT NO TROUBLE, DO WE?
HUH! I DIDN'T WANT TO COME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE!
I SAY, SIR! THE SHOW IS FAR FROM OVER...

THE TOUGH NAMED HANK CLAMBERED ON TO THE STAGE AND BACK-HANDED THE SEATED VENTRILOQUIST...
THE SHOW'S OVER MISTER, SHUT UP!
THE 'MAN' COLLAPSED BUT HIS 'DUMMY' HIT BACK!
FOOLED YOU, BULLY. I'M THE VENTRILOQUIST!
OOOUF!
AT THIS, TROMSO THE TERRIBLE AND MIDAS CRINGELIN RUSHED ON TO THE STAGE . . .
UH-OH, THERE'S TROUBLE... YOU'D BETTER DO SOMETHING, TROMSO!
YEAH! I'LL GET MISTER THESPIUS!
LOUIE, GO GIVE HANK SOME HELP!

BUT THE BACKDROP PARTED, AND THERE STOOD THE GREAT THESPIUS HIMSELF!
HUH?
STAY PUT, THIN-WITTED OAF! HOW DAREST THOU PLACE THY UNCOUTH FEET UNINVITED UPON THESE BOARDS..?
THE HULKING MAN STOOD STILL ... AND THE ACTOR'S PIERCING DARK EYES SEEMED TO HOLD HIM, AND PENETRATE RIGHT INTO THE DIM CAVITY OF HIS BRAIN, UNTIL . . .
WHAT A PERFORMANCE ... HE'S HYPNOTISED HIM!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE! IT'S AN OFFENCE IN THIS TOWN TO ASSAULT OFFICIALS FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE...
FAUGH! SUCH LOUTS AS YOU DISHONOUR THE DIGNITY OF THAT TIME-RESPECTED CIVIC DUTY...

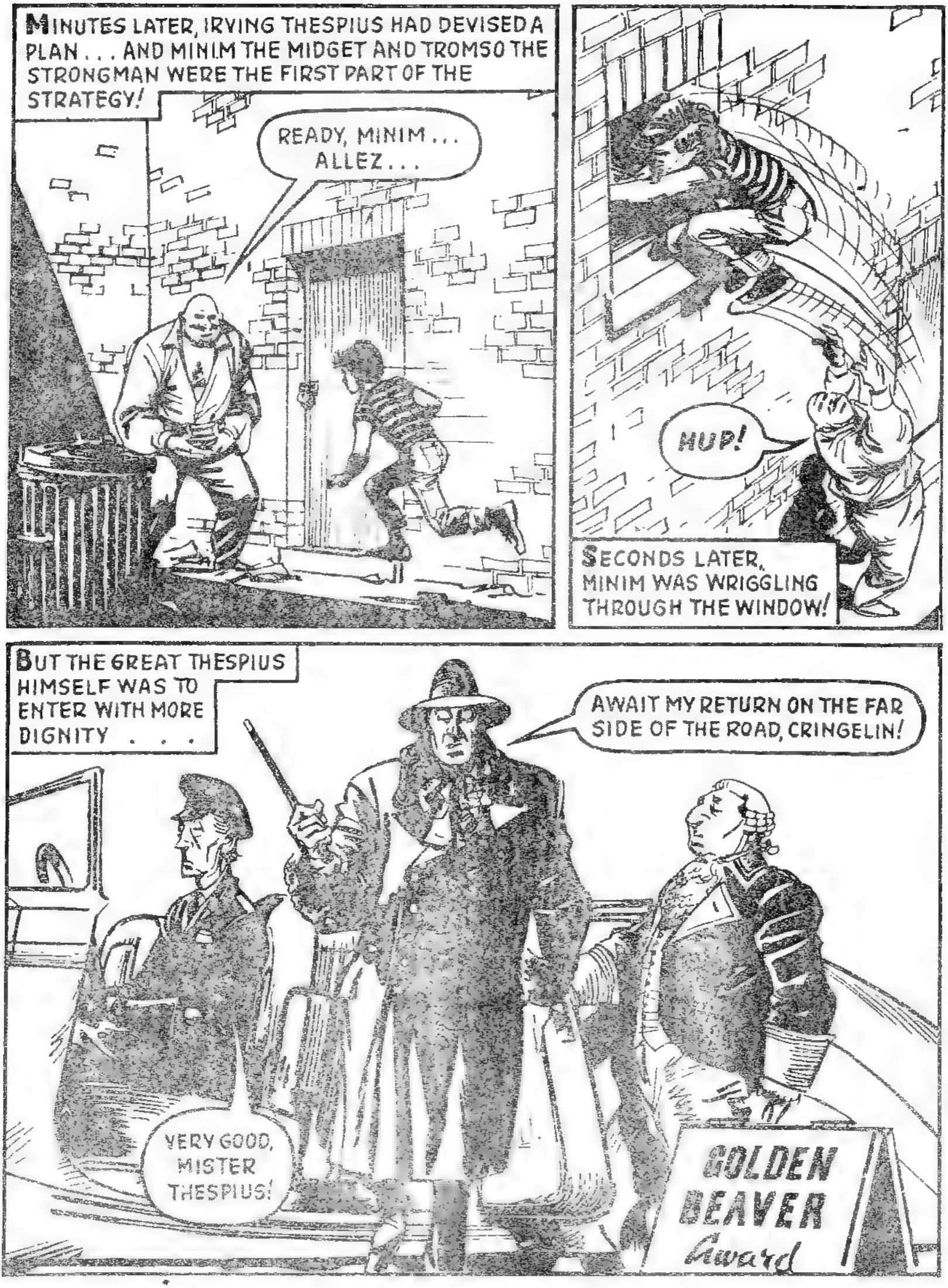

CHIEF OF POLICE HENGIST GROUND HIS TEETH...THEN ON STAGE THERE WAS A BRILLIANT FLASH . . .
AND SUDDENLY TWO IDENTICAL IMAGES OF THESPIUS PRESENTED THEMSELVES!
NOW THERE'S TWO OF HIM... WHICH ONE IS THE *REAL* GUY?
DON'T LET IT WORRY YOU, HENGIST, BECAUSE I'M GIVING THAT VAGRANT HAS-BEEN TWELVE HOURS TO GET OUT OF TOWN! AND HE CAN TAKE HIS TRAP-DOORS AND STAGE MIRRORS WITH HIM!


VITCH DRAGGED A NEWSPAPER FROM HIS HENCHMAN'S POCKET!
MAYOR VITCH OPENS SUPERMARKET
PEOPLE STOPPED APPLAUDING YOU TWENTY YEARS AGO, THESPIUS! YOU'RE A DEADBEAT NOBODY THESE DAYS... I'M THE BIG NAME AROUND HERE — YOU'LL SEE IT SPELT BIG IN EVERY NEWSPAPER!
THE MAYOR LEFT, AND HIS 'GANG' STRUGGLED OUT AFTER HIM... AND FOR SOLACE THE GREAT THESPIUS CALLED FOR HIS ALBUM OF PRESS CUTTINGS...
DON'T LET THAT UPSTART RUFFIAN WORRY YOU, MISTER THESPIUS... YOUR COLLECTION OF CUTTINGS IS THE MOST MAGNIFICENT IN THE WORLD...
BUT THEY ARE ALL OLD, CRINGELIN... OLD! NOT A HEADLINE FOR FIFTEEN YEARS..! NOT EVEN SMALL PRINT FOR TWO YEARS... FAME HAS PASSED ME BY...
THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE GREEN ROOM WAS DEEP GLOOM...
THERE IS NO JUSTICE!
ALAS, TODAY'S WAY TO FAME LIES THROUGH CRIME. BUT I SHALL WIN BACK THE HEADLINES...
YES, I SHALL WIN THEM BACK, I SHALL REGAIN PUBLIC ACCLAIM BY FIGHTING MAYOR VITCH'S CRIMINAL WAYS WITH CRIME ITSELF...
...BECAUSE I SHALL BECOME THE MOST DARING, SKILFUL AND SENSATIONAL CRIMINAL OF ALL TIME!

WHAT DO WE ROB, MASTER ... BANKS?
HOW ABOUT STEALING CARS? I'D LIKE A CAR OF MY OWN!
MAY I SUGGEST BERGERS, THE JEWELLERS..?
FAUGH! I WILL NOT DEIGN TO DEMEAN MYSELF WITH SUCH PETTY PILFERING! MY CRIMES WILL BE SENSATIONS IN AUDACITY ... SPECTACULARS IN FELONY... EACH ONE A HEADLINE-HITTER! I SHALL BE AS RENOWNED IN CRIME AS I WAS ONCE IN THE THEATRE!

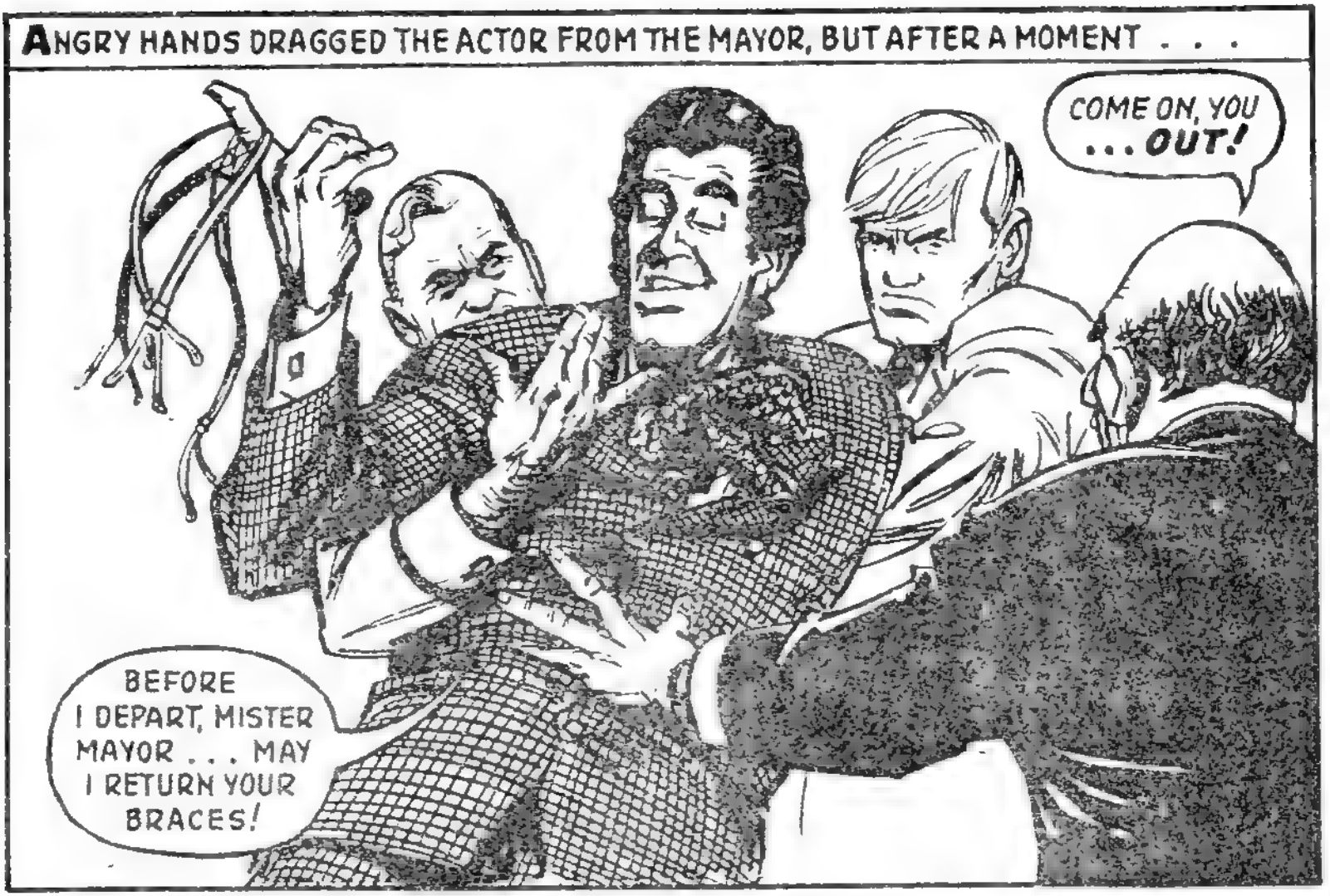
THESPIUS CALLED FOR THE MORNING'S NEWSPAPER, AND READ FROM IT IN SONOROUS TONES . . .
TODAY MAYOR VITCH WILL PRESENT THE GOLDEN BEAVER AWARD TO THE BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AT A CONVENTION TO BE HELD AT THE TINPAN AMERICANA HOTEL . . .
I THEREFORE INTEND TO DEPRIVE OUR SHADY-MINDED MAYOR NOT ONLY OF THE GOLDEN BEAVER, SOLID GOLD VALUED AT TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS, BUT ALSO OF THE HEADLINES IN THE EVENING EDITIONS OF OUR NEWSPAPERS!
WE ARE GOING OUT... MY HAT AND CANE, CRINGELIN!
I HAVE THEM HERE, MASTER.

A SHORT WHILE LATER THE ODDLY-ASSORTED PARTY ARRIVED IN THE STREET OUTSIDE THE AMERICANA HOTEL . . .
REGARD THE FAT BUSINESS PAUNCHES OF THE YEAR . . . THE GREEDY MEN, THE RUTHLESS GRINDERS OF THE FACES OF THE POOR!
GOLDEN BEAVER AWA
THE BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR CO
AMERICANA HOT
THE PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH COPS . . . EVEN IF WE GOT IN, WE'D NEVER GET OUT AGAIN WITH THE GOLDEN BEAVER TROPHY!
THEN, DEAR MINIM, WE MUST USE OUR IMAGINATION AND OUTSTANDING SKILLS TO ACHIEVE THAT END . . . I KNOW THE PLACE WELL, FOR I STAYED THERE AS GUEST OF HONOUR IN THE AUTUMN OF NINETEEN-FIFTY-FOUR . . .


MINUTES LATER, IRVING THESPIUS HAD DEVISED A PLAN . . . AND MINIM THE MIDGET AND TROMSO THE STRONGMAN WERE THE FIRST PART OF THE STRATEGY!
READY, MINIM . . . ALLEZ . . .
HUP!
SECONDS LATER, MINIM WAS WRIGGLING THROUGH THE WINDOW!
BUT THE GREAT THESPIUS HIMSELF WAS TO ENTER WITH MORE DIGNITY . . .
AWAIT MY RETURN ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ROAD, CRINGELIN!
VERY GOOD, MISTER THESPIUS!
GOLDEN BEAVER Award

AS THOUGH WITH EVERY RIGHT, HE TRAVELLED UPWARDS IN THE LIFT, HIS SILK-SMOOTH FINGERS BUSY IN ANOTHER MAN'S POCKET!
THEN TO THE DINING ROOM ITSELF . . .
I'M SORRY, SIR! THERE IS POSITIVELY NO ADMITTANCE WITHOUT AN INVITATION CARD . . .
B-BUT I HAD IT JUST TWO MINUTES AGO . . .

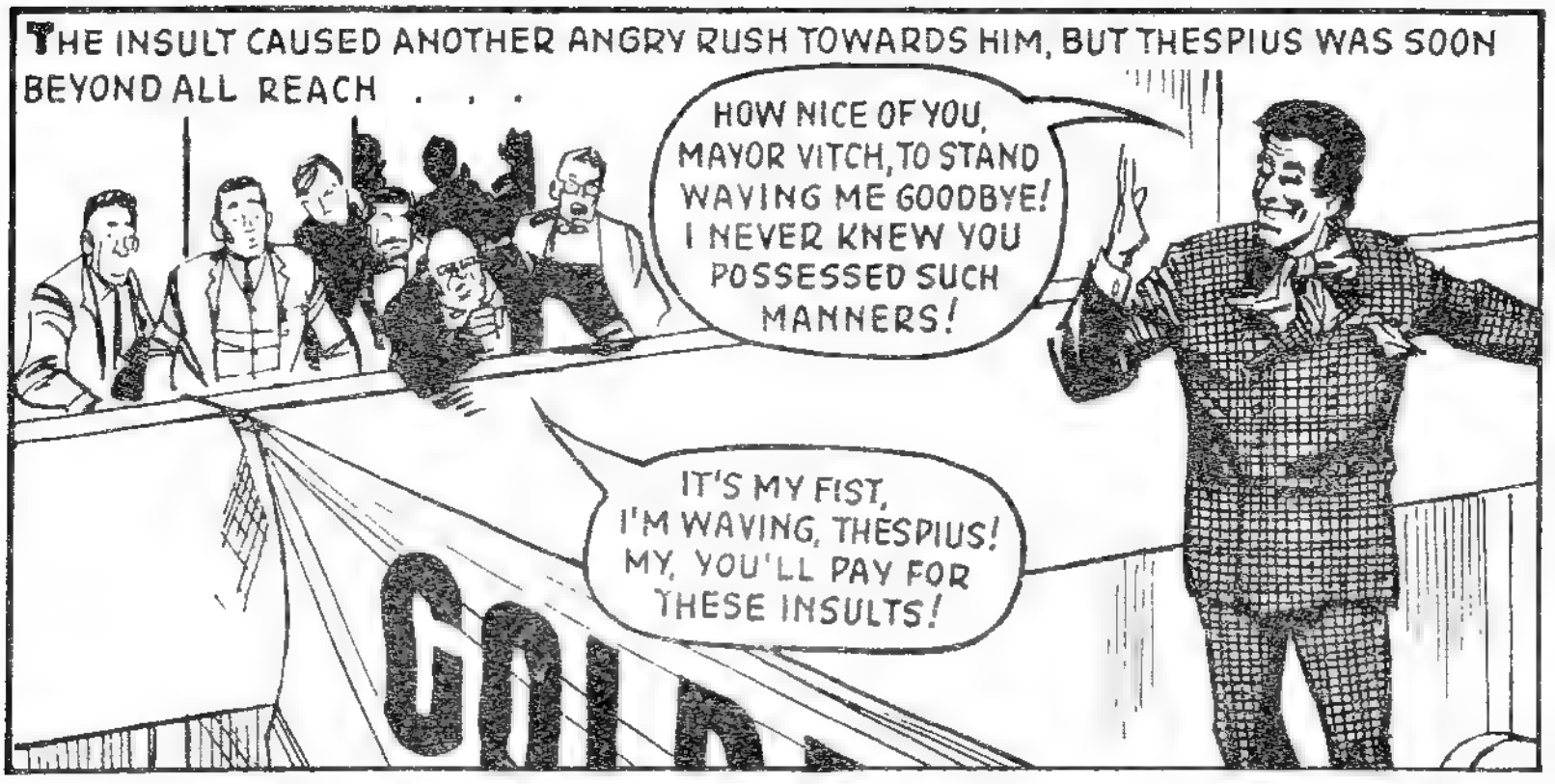
THE MEAL PROGRESSED WITH LAVISH EASE, AND THESPIUS TOOK PAINS TO REMAIN INCONSPICUOUS UNTIL . . .
. . . AND NOW I CALL UPON MAYOR VITCH TO PRESENT THE GOLDEN BEAVER AWARDS FOR THIS YEAR . . .!
I OBJECT!
I OBJECT BECAUSE I KNOW THIS MAN IS A GANGSTER AND A FRAUD . . .
I HOPE MINIM IS ON CUE!
THROW HIM OUT!


ANGRY HANDS DRAGGED THE ACTOR FROM THE MAYOR, BUT AFTER A MOMENT . . .
COME ON, YOU ...OUT!
BEFORE I DEPART, MISTER MAYOR . . . MAY I RETURN YOUR BRACES!

FOR IN THE FEW SECONDS THAT HE HAD BEEN CLOSE TO VITCH, THE FINGERS OF IRVING THESPIUS HAD ONCE AGAIN BEEN BUSY WITH DEVASTATING EFFECT!
HA, HA, HA!

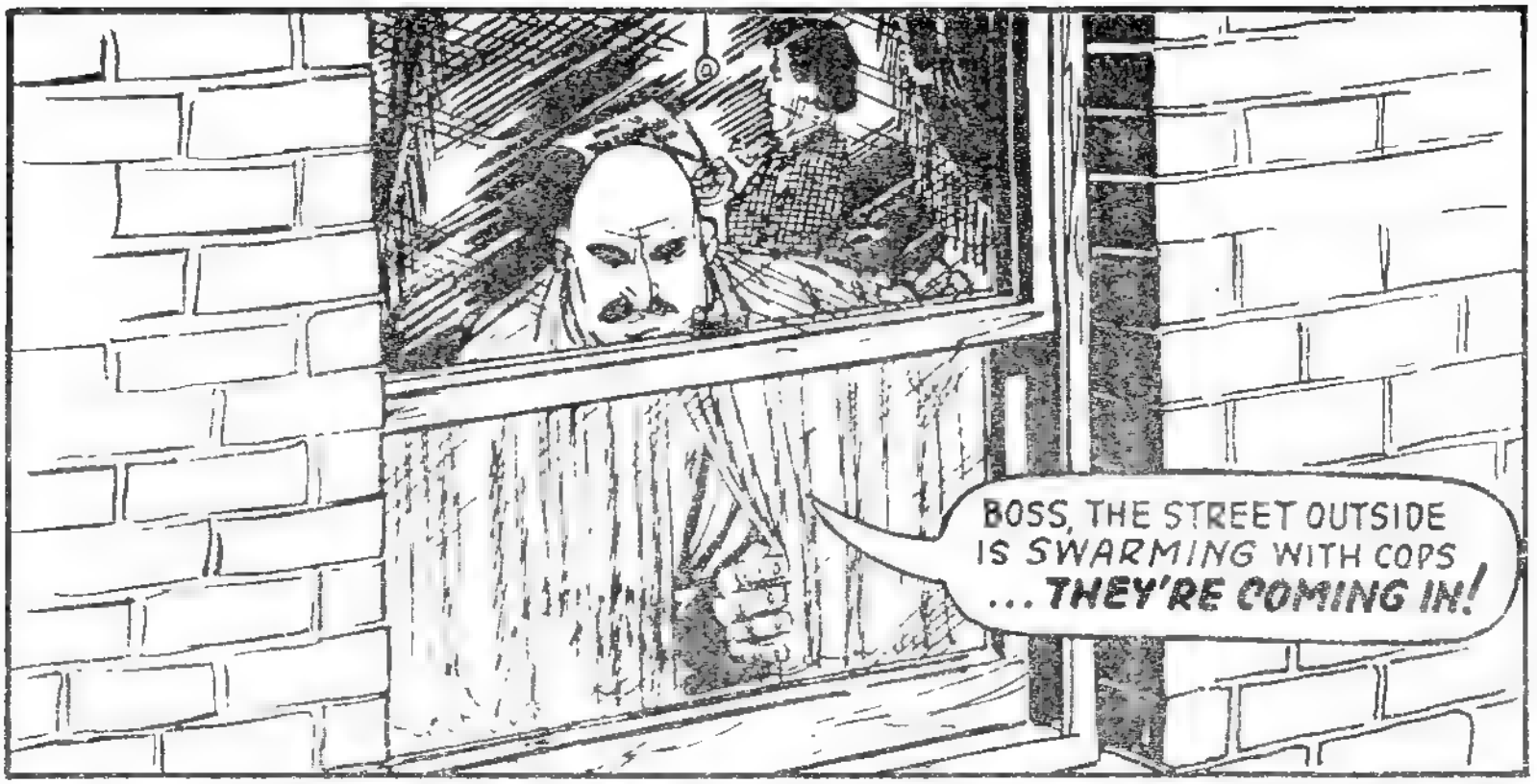
AND SO, WHILST THESPIUS' CUNNING SLEIGHT OF HAND HAD DISTRACTED EVERYONE'S ATTENTION, MINIM WAS BUSY . . .

IT'S TIME I WENT TOO!
FAREWELL, GENTLEMEN . . . I DON'T THINK I COULD STAND YOUR ODIOUS COMPANY FOR ONE MINUTE LONGER!


THE INSULT CAUSED ANOTHER ANGRY RUSH TOWARDS HIM, BUT THESPIUS WAS SOON BEYOND ALL REACH . . .
HOW NICE OF YOU, MAYOR VITCH, TO STAND WAVING ME GOODBYE! I NEVER KNEW YOU POSSESSED SUCH MANNERS!
IT'S MY FIST, I'M WAVING, THESPIUS! MY, YOU'LL PAY FOR THESE INSULTS!

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE STREET, THESPIUS TOOK A NEAT SPOOL FROM HIS POCKET . . .
A TRIFLE TOO FAR FOR ME TO JUMP, I FEAR! I LIKE MY DESCENTS TO BE GRACIOUS AND NON-FATAL!
GOLDEN
BUSINESSMAN OF

DRIVE ON, CRINGELIN ... I HAVE NO MORE BUSINESS IN THIS PART OF TOWN!
VERY GOOD, SIR!
WHILST AT THE REAR OF THE BUILDING . . .
CATCH ME, TROMSO!
AND BY THE TIME THE ACTUAL THEFT WAS DISCOVERED, THE LOOT HAD BEEN REMOVED CLEAR OF THE HOTEL. LATER THAT AFTERNOON . . .
NOW THAT IS WHAT I CALL A GOOD HEADLINE! BRING ME MY SCISSORS AND PASTE POT, CRINGELIN!
The Evening Telbourne
THE GREAT THES
DECLARED BY MAY
PUBLIC ENEMY Nº1


BOSS, THE STREET OUTSIDE IS SWARMING WITH COPS ... THEY'RE COMING IN!

OKAY, THESPIUS— COME ON OUT— WE'VE A WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST!

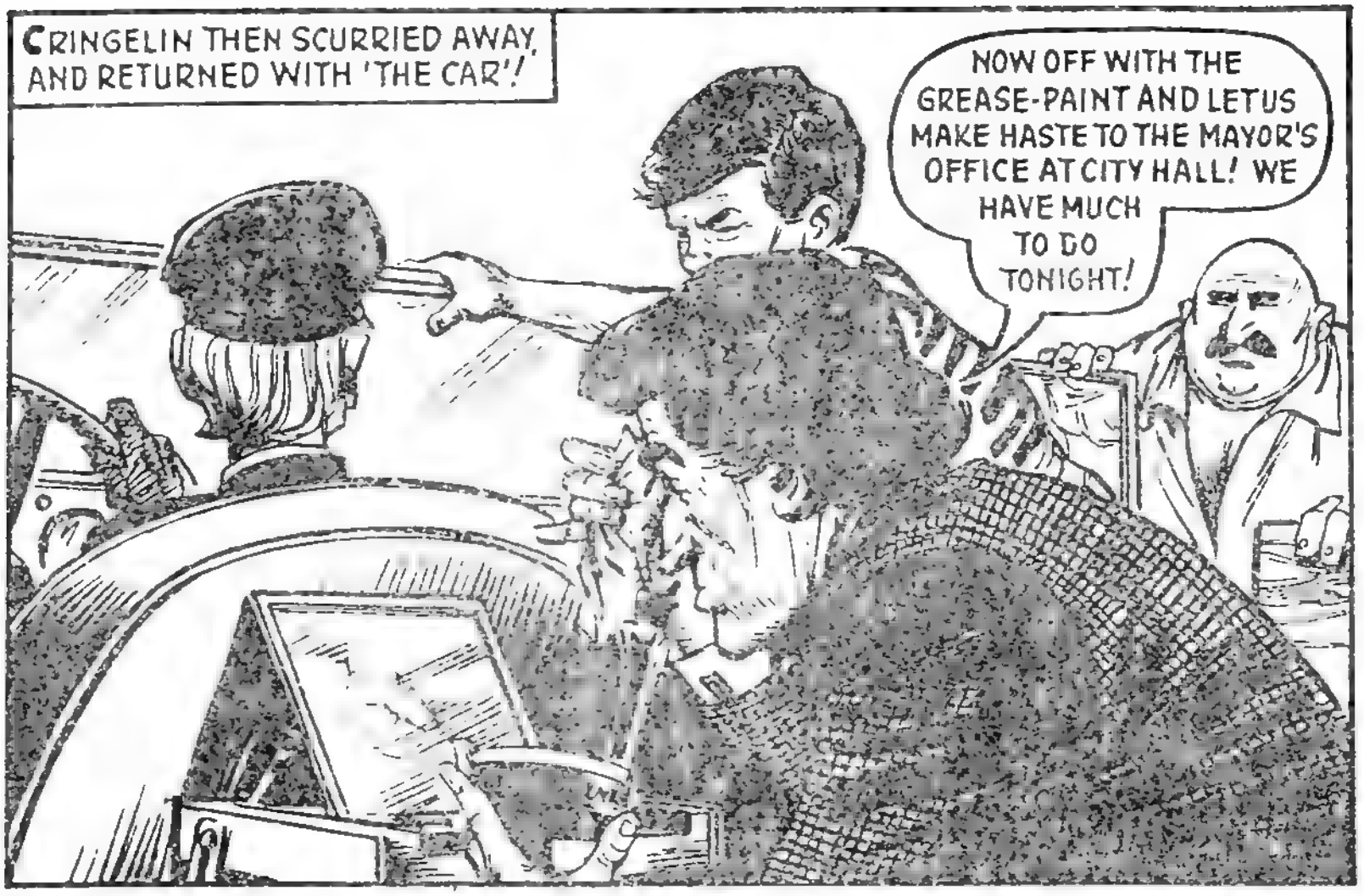
SUDDENLY . . .
AAAARGH!
IF IT IS I, WHOM YOU SEEK, . . . REGARD THE STAGE!
YEAH . . . I SEE YOU, THESPIUS . . . GET UP THERE AFTER HIM!

A NEAT PIECE OF MIMICRY AND VOICE PROJECTION, MINIM!
SURE WAS, THAT COP *REALLY* THOUGHT YOUR VOICE CAME FROM THE STAGE!

BUT ON THE STAGE . . .
GOTCHA . . . *AAAAGH!*
IT'S A TRICK!

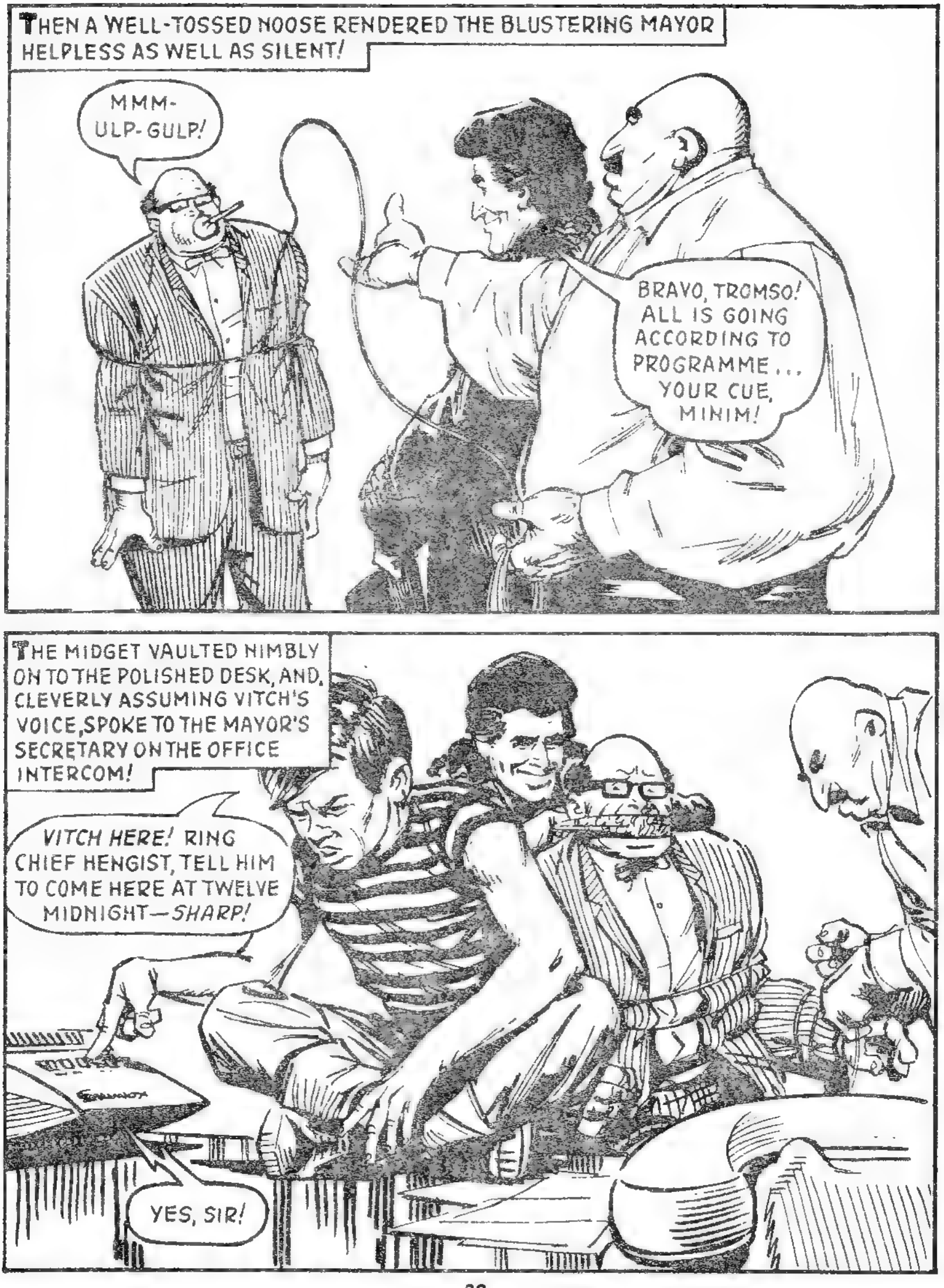
THEN . . .
THE TIME IS NOW, CRINGELIN!
CRINGELIN TUGGED DOWN THE LEVER, AND THE STAGE SUDDENLY REVOLVED AT DIZZYING SPEED . . .
AAAARGH!
STOP IT!
OW! HELP!

AND SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, A STRING OF HANDCUFFED COPS LURCHED GROGGILY OUT OF THE STAGE DOOR, TO BE GREETED BY THE ANGRY FIGURE OF MAYOR VITCH!
STAGE DOOR
SET THOSE MEN BACK TO HEADQUARTERS, CHIEF HENGIST. . . YOU'LL HEAR FROM ME LATER!
Y-YES, MAYOR V-VITCH!
A MASTERFUL PERFORMANCE, MASTER... YOU DECEIVED THEM ENTIRELY!
SUFFICIENT UNTO THE MOMENT, CRINGELIN.

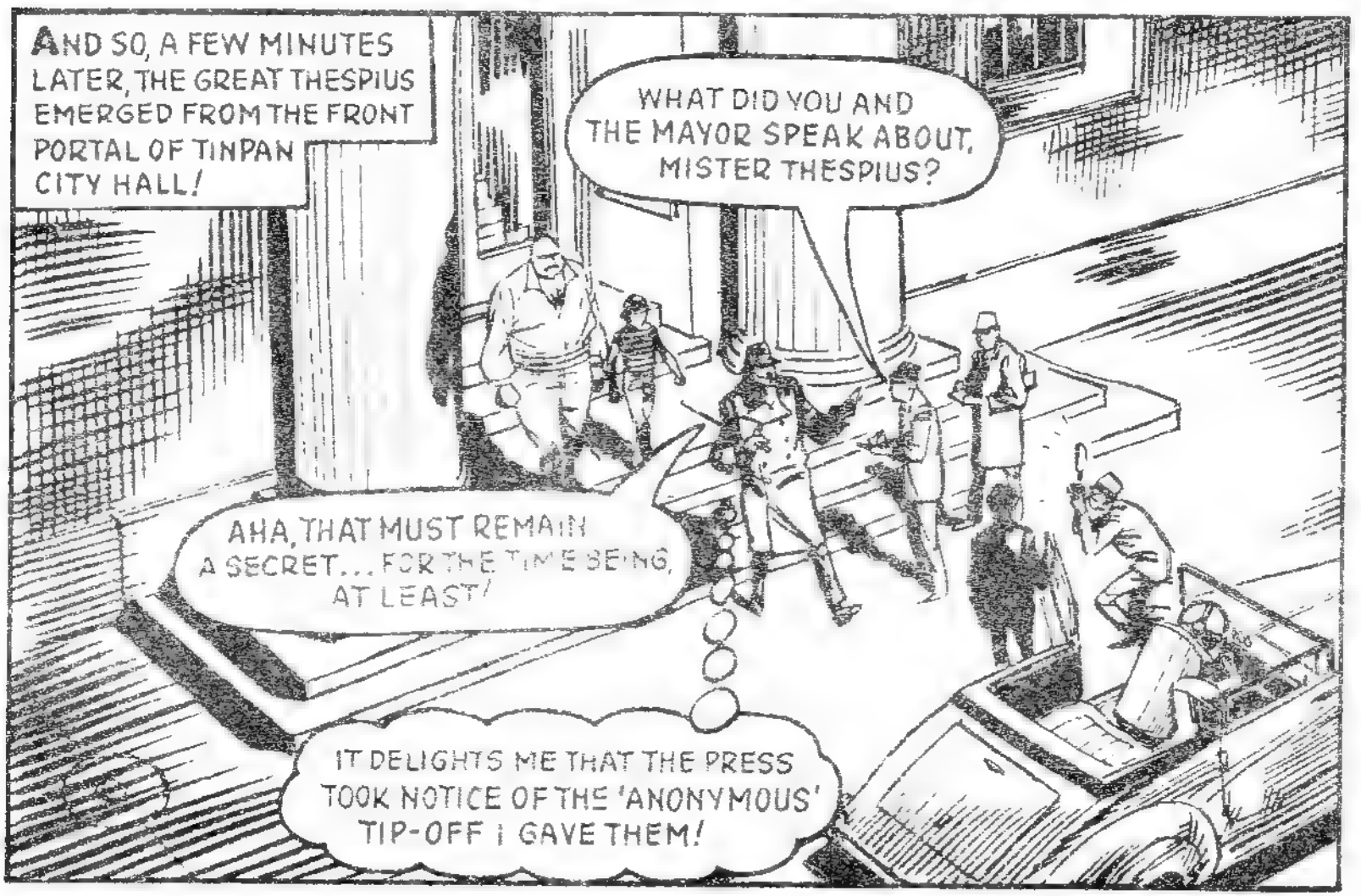

CRINGELIN THEN SCURRIED AWAY, AND RETURNED WITH 'THE CAR'!
NOW OFF WITH THE GREASE-PAINT AND LETUS MAKE HASTE TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE AT CITY HALL! WE HAVE MUCH TO DO TONIGHT!

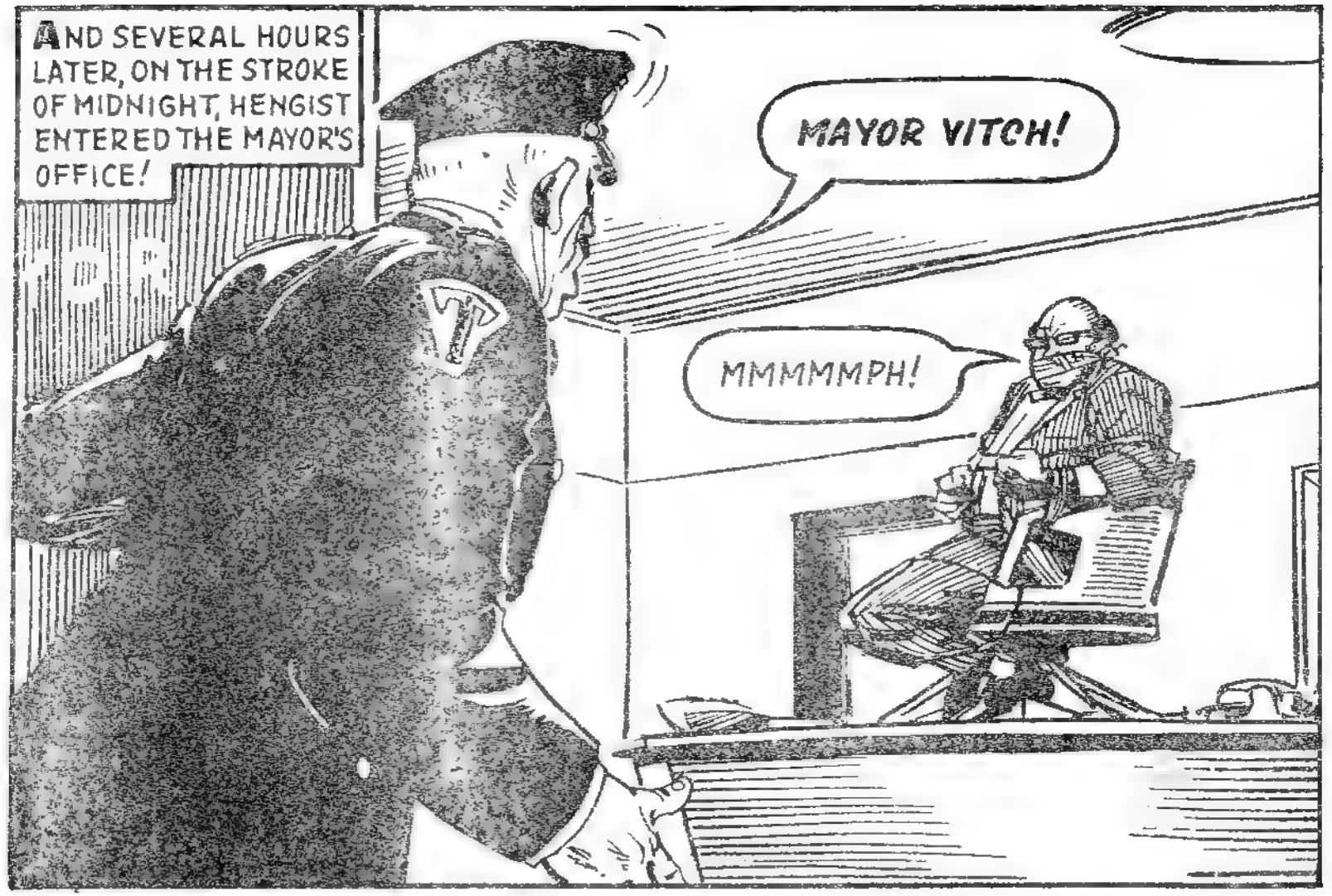
AND LATER . . .
THE FIRST FLOOR BALCONY . . . AN EASY POINT OF ACCESS!

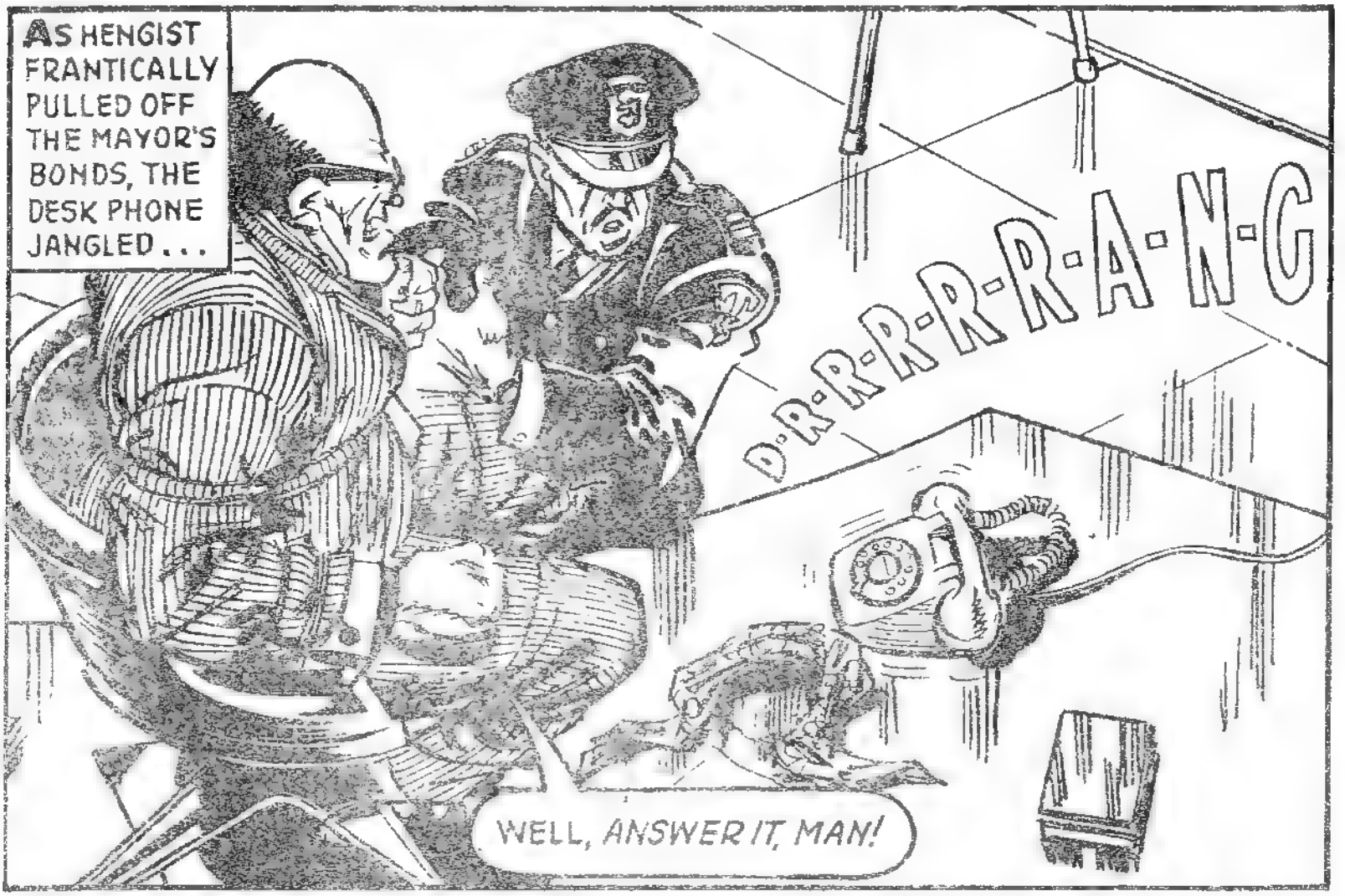
THE BALCONY DOORS WERE LOCKED, BUT STRONGMAN TROMSO DID NOT LET THAT WORRY HIM!
MAYOR VITCH HAD BEEN INSIDE WORKING AT HIS DESK. HE TURNED ANGRILY AT THE INTRUSION. HE SAW THESPIUS MAKE A PASS WITH HIS HAND AND SEEM TO PLUCK A "SUCKER-DART" FROM THIN AIR . . .
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF . . .
THE "DART" THEN FLEW FROM HAND TO MOUTH . . . THE MAYOR'S MOUTH!
ULP!


THEN A WELL-TOSSED NOOSE RENDERED THE BLUSTERING MAYOR HELPLESS AS WELL AS SILENT!
MMM-ULP-GULP!
BRAVO, TROMSO! ALL IS GOING ACCORDING TO PROGRAMME... YOUR CUE, MINIM!
THE MIDGET VAULTED NIMBLY ON TO THE POLISHED DESK, AND, CLEVERLY ASSUMING VITCH'S VOICE, SPOKE TO THE MAYOR'S SECRETARY ON THE OFFICE INTERCOM!
VITCH HERE! RING CHIEF HENGIST, TELL HIM TO COME HERE AT TWELVE MIDNIGHT—SHARP!
YES, SIR!

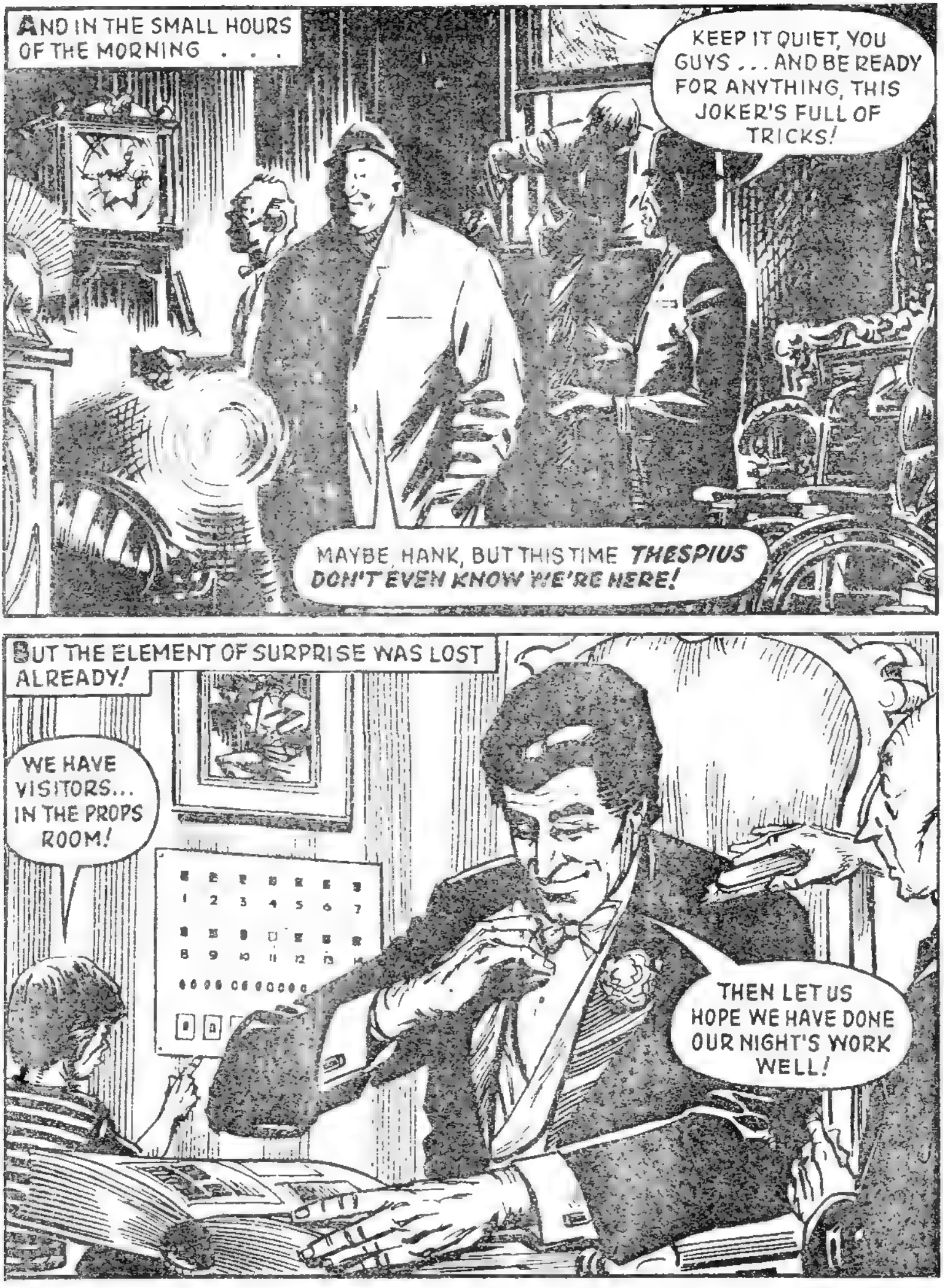
THEN YOU CAN GO HOME, BUT TELL THE TELEPHONE OPERATORS AND THE JANITORS THAT I'LL BE WORKING LATE ON A PRIVATE MATTER AND IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES MUST I BE DISTURBED . . . UNTIL *MIDNIGHT!*
CERTAINLY, MISTER VITCH ... GOOD NIGHT, SIR!
A - H


AND SO, A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE GREAT THESPIUS EMERGED FROM THE FRONT PORTAL OF TINPAN CITY HALL!
WHAT DID YOU AND THE MAYOR SPEAK ABOUT, MISTER THESPIUS?
AHA, THAT MUST REMAIN A SECRET... FOR THE TIME BEING, AT LEAST!
IT DELIGHTS ME THAT THE PRESS TOOK NOTICE OF THE 'ANONYMOUS' TIP-OFF I GAVE THEM!


AND SEVERAL HOURS LATER, ON THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT, HENGIST ENTERED THE MAYOR'S OFFICE!
MAYOR VITCH!
MMMMMPH!


AS HENGIST FRANTICALLY PULLED OFF THE MAYOR'S BONDS, THE DESK PHONE JANGLED . . .
D-R-R-R-R-R-A-N-G
WELL, ANSWER IT, MAN!

IRVING THESPIUS SPEAKING! THE GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS REQUIRE TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED AT OUR MEETING THIS EVENING! I SHAN'T TELL THEM, OF COURSE... UNLESS I AM ARRESTED!
GRRRR!
VITCH POSED AS A TOUGH MAN, AND THAT REPUTATION WOULD BE SERIOUSLY HARMED IF IT EVER LEAKED OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN SO HUMILIATED IN HIS OWN OFFICE . . . BUT VITCH WANTED VENGEANCE!
THAT CREEP'S MADE A BAD ENEMY IN ME. GET SOME OF YOUR TOUGHEST BOYS, OUT OF UNIFORM . . . TELL 'EM TO ROUGH HIM UP A LITTLE...
...THEN PUT HIM IN THE SORTA' CAR THAT HAS A NASTY ACCIDENT TEN MILES OUTA' TOWN!


AND IN THE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING . . .
KEEP IT QUIET, YOU GUYS . . . AND BE READY FOR ANYTHING, THIS JOKER'S FULL OF TRICKS!
MAYBE, HANK, BUT THIS TIME THESPIUS DON'T EVEN KNOW WE'RE HERE!
BUT THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE WAS LOST ALREADY!
WE HAVE VISITORS... IN THE PROPS ROOM!
THEN LET US HOPE WE HAVE DONE OUR NIGHT'S WORK WELL!

I STILL CAN'T SEE NO-ONE!
THAT'S THE TIME TO BE CAREFUL . . . WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE THEM, AND THEY CAN SEE YOU!

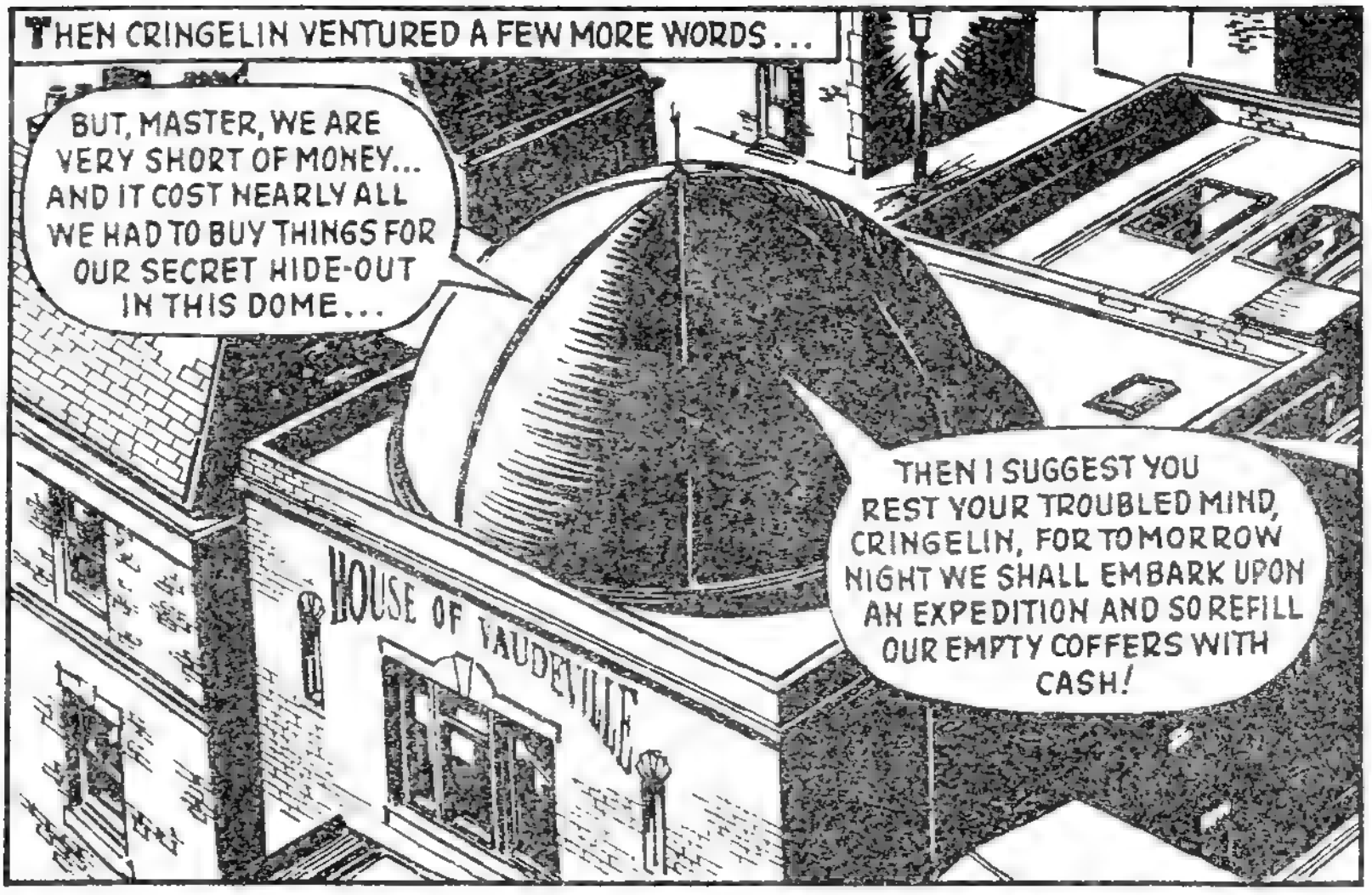
LOUIE FLASHED HIS LAMP INTO A DARK CORNER . . .
HANK, LOOK... AAAAGH!

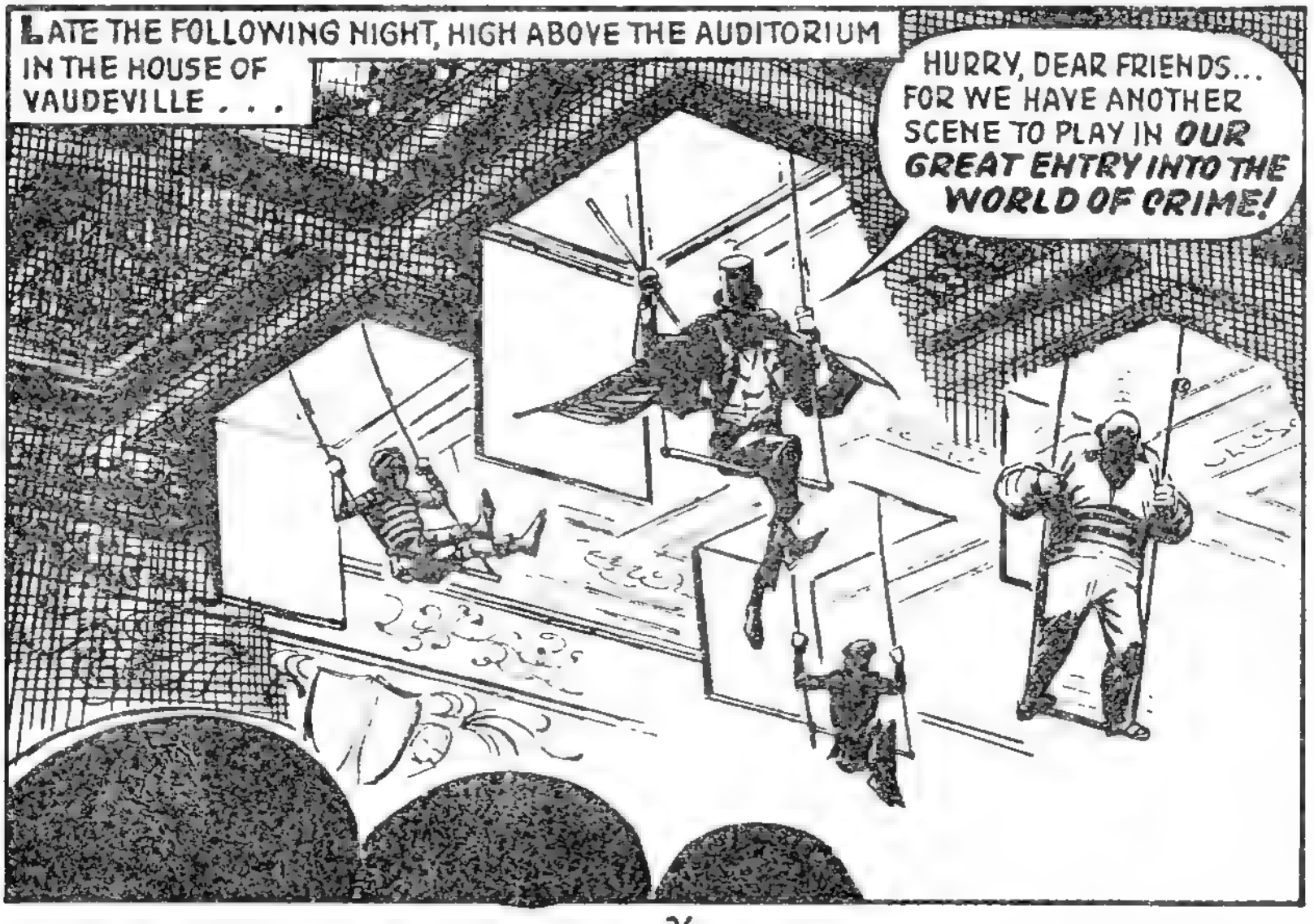
EAGLE P.L. /

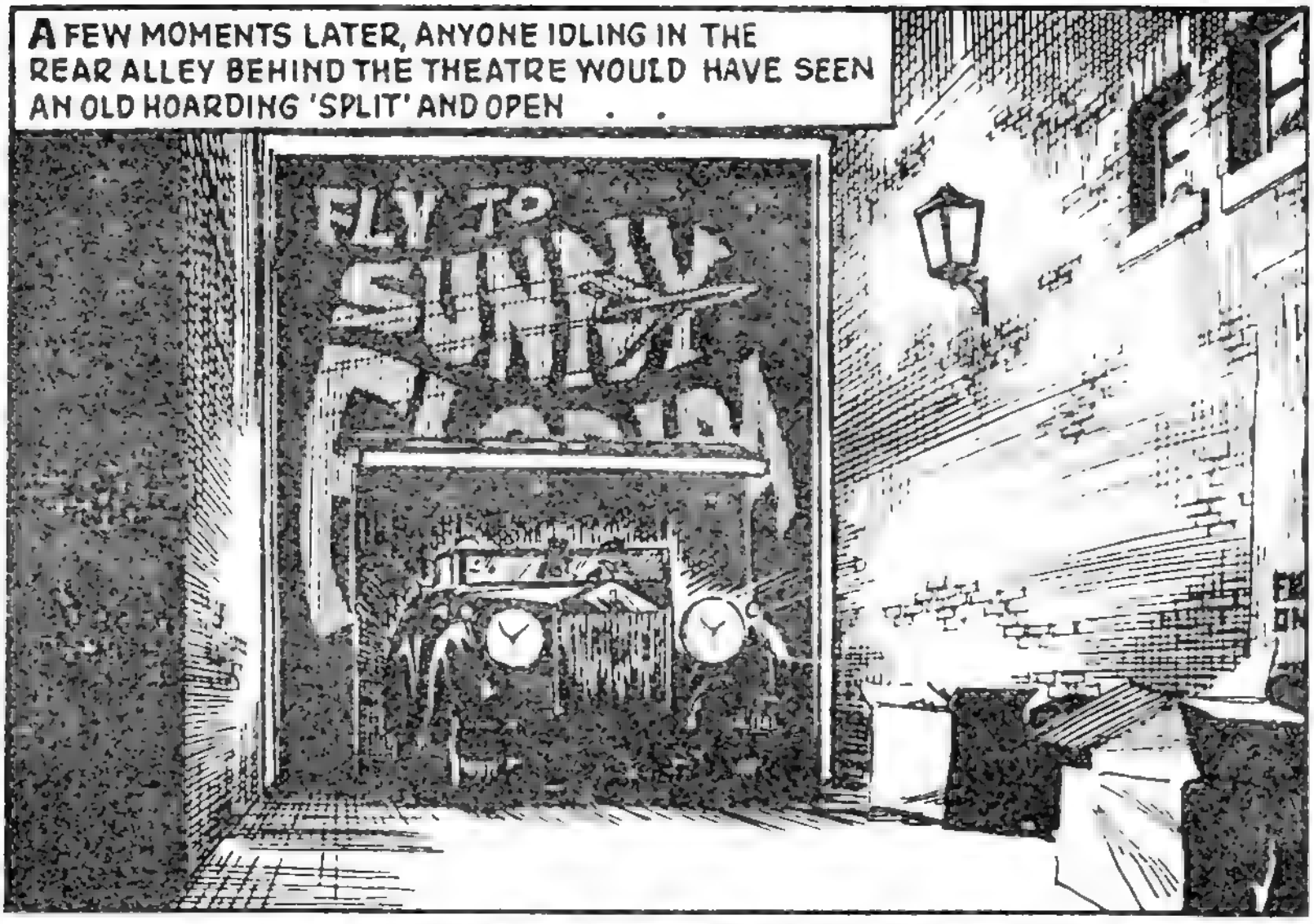
A COUPLE OF GUNS CRACKED, AND THE PLY-WOOD FIGURE REELED AND FELL . . .
IDIOT!
OOOOH!

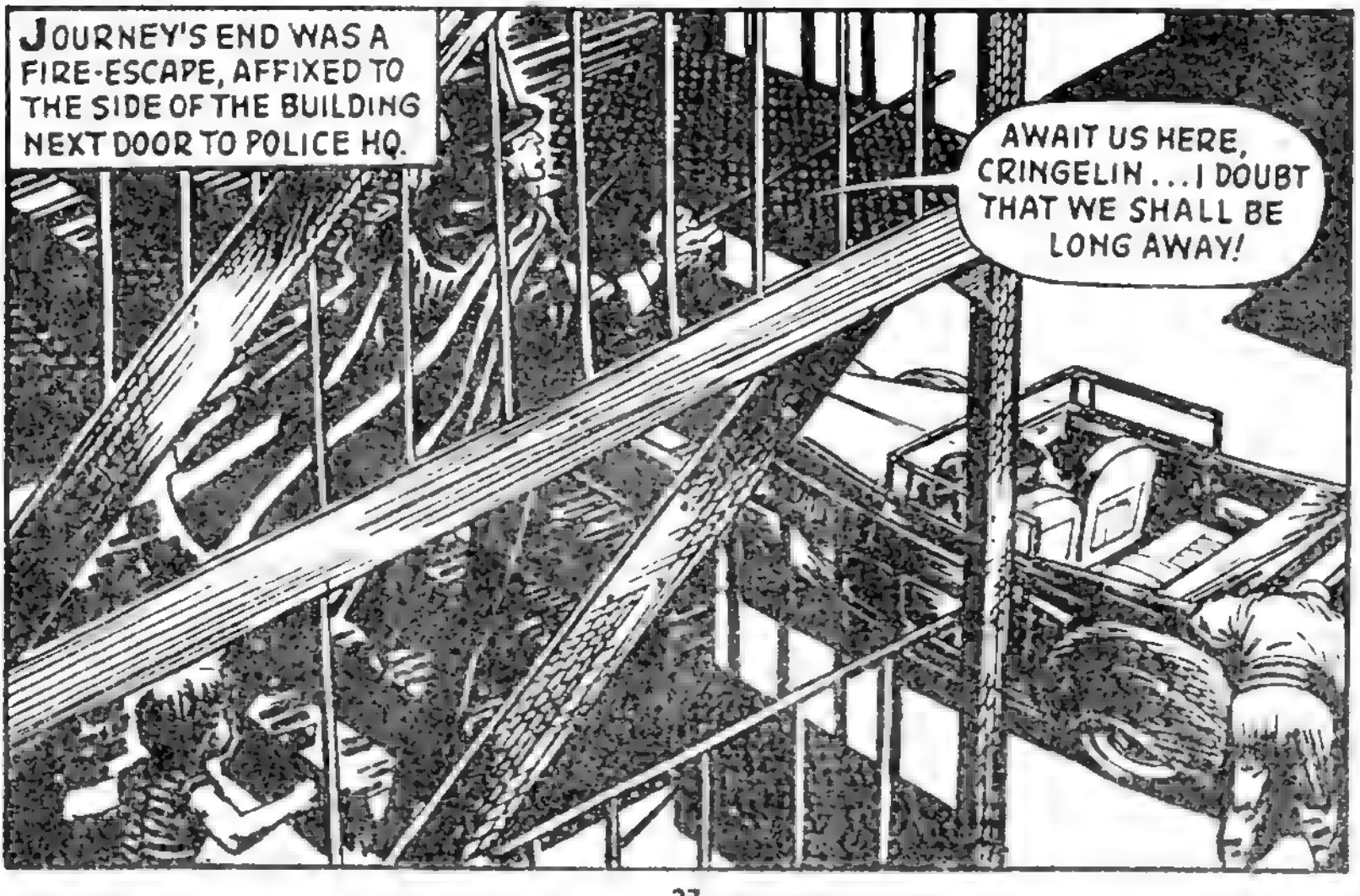
THE SEARCH CONTINUED . . .
EMPTY...
YEAH! SEEMS LIKE THEY LEFT TOWN WITHOUT US TELLING 'EM!

LATER...
WE SEARCHED THE BOILER AND THE FOYER AND CLOAKROOMS...
...AND ALL THE OTHER DRESSING ROOMS . . . NOTHING!
HEY!
C'MON, LOUIE, LET'S GET OUTA' THIS CREEPY DUMP!
BUT IN A SECRET ROOM . . .
OUR VISITORS ARE TAKING THEIR LEAVE, MASTER!
EXCELLENT! AND I FEEL, GALLANT COMPANY, THAT YOU DESERVE MY CONGRATULATIONS FOR YOUR PARTS IN THIS EVENING'S ENDEAVOURS!
THANK YOU, MASTER, OH THANK YOU!

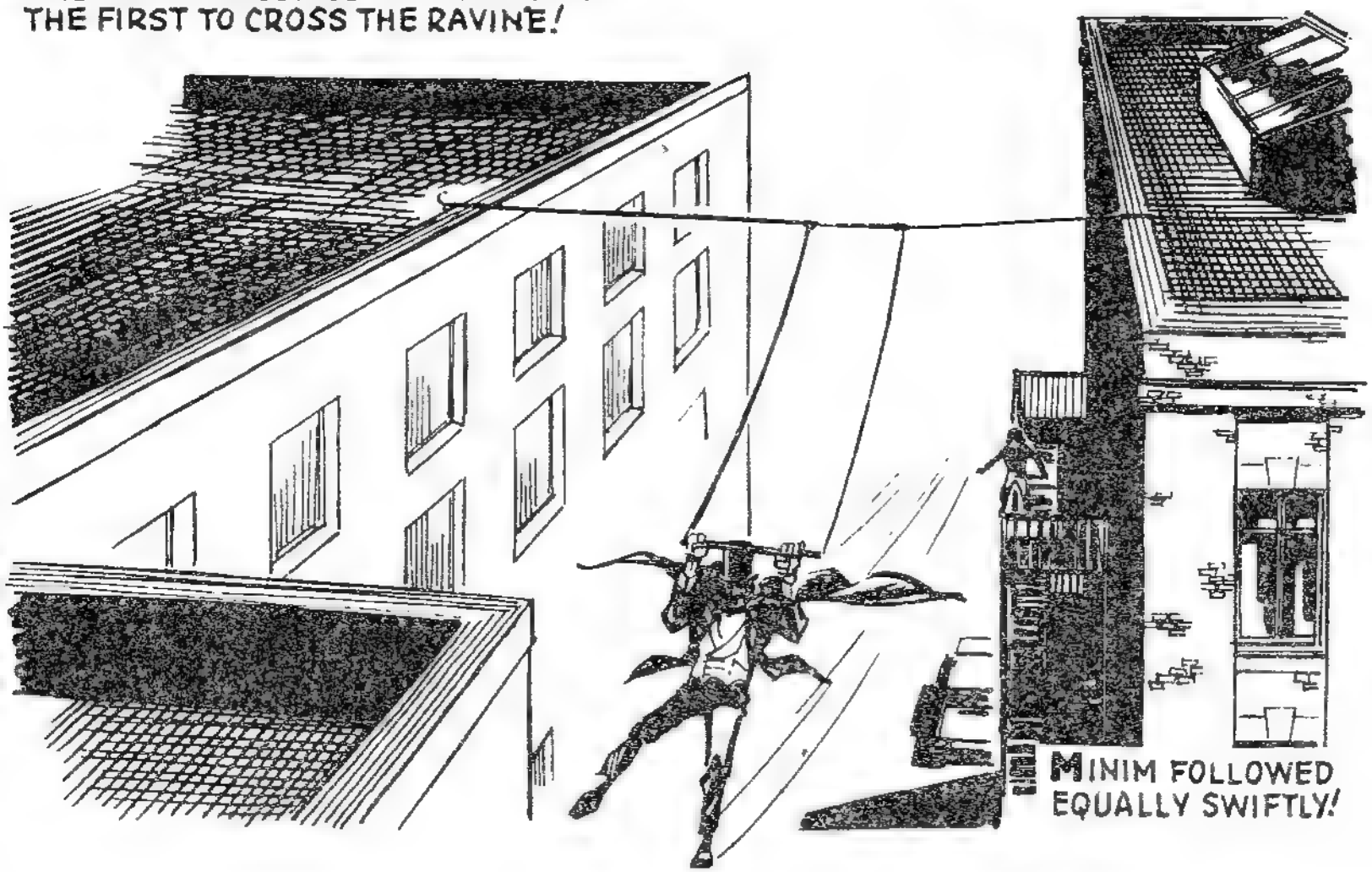

THEN CRINGELIN VENTURED A FEW MORE WORDS...
BUT, MASTER, WE ARE VERY SHORT OF MONEY... AND IT COST NEARLY ALL WE HAD TO BUY THINGS FOR OUR SECRET HIDE-OUT IN THIS DOME...
HOUSE OF VAUDEVILLE
THEN I SUGGEST YOU REST YOUR TROUBLED MIND, CRINGELIN, FOR TOMORROW NIGHT WE SHALL EMBARK UPON AN EXPEDITION AND SO REFILL OUR EMPTY COFFERS WITH CASH!


LATE THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, HIGH ABOVE THE AUDITORIUM IN THE HOUSE OF VAUDEVILLE . . .
HURRY, DEAR FRIENDS... FOR WE HAVE ANOTHER SCENE TO PLAY IN OUR GREAT ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF CRIME!


A FEW MOMENTS LATER, ANYONE IDLING IN THE REAR ALLEY BEHIND THE THEATRE WOULD HAVE SEEN AN OLD HOARDING 'SPLIT' AND OPEN . . .
FLY TO


JOURNEY'S END WAS A FIRE-ESCAPE, AFFIXED TO THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING NEXT DOOR TO POLICE HQ.
AWAIT US HERE, CRINGELIN . . . I DOUBT THAT WE SHALL BE LONG AWAY!

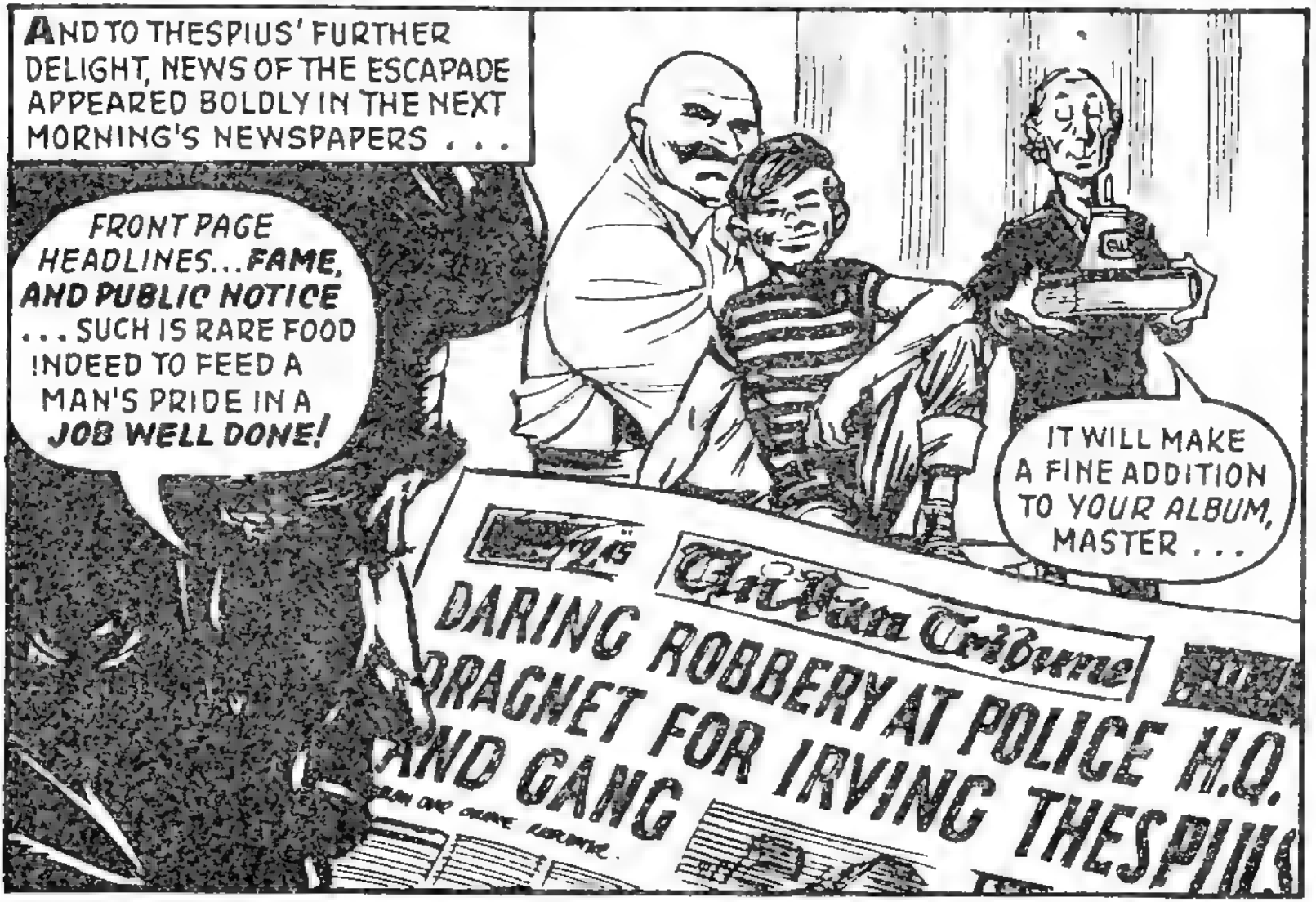
THE GREAT THESPIUS HIMSELF WAS THE FIRST TO CROSS THE RAVINE!

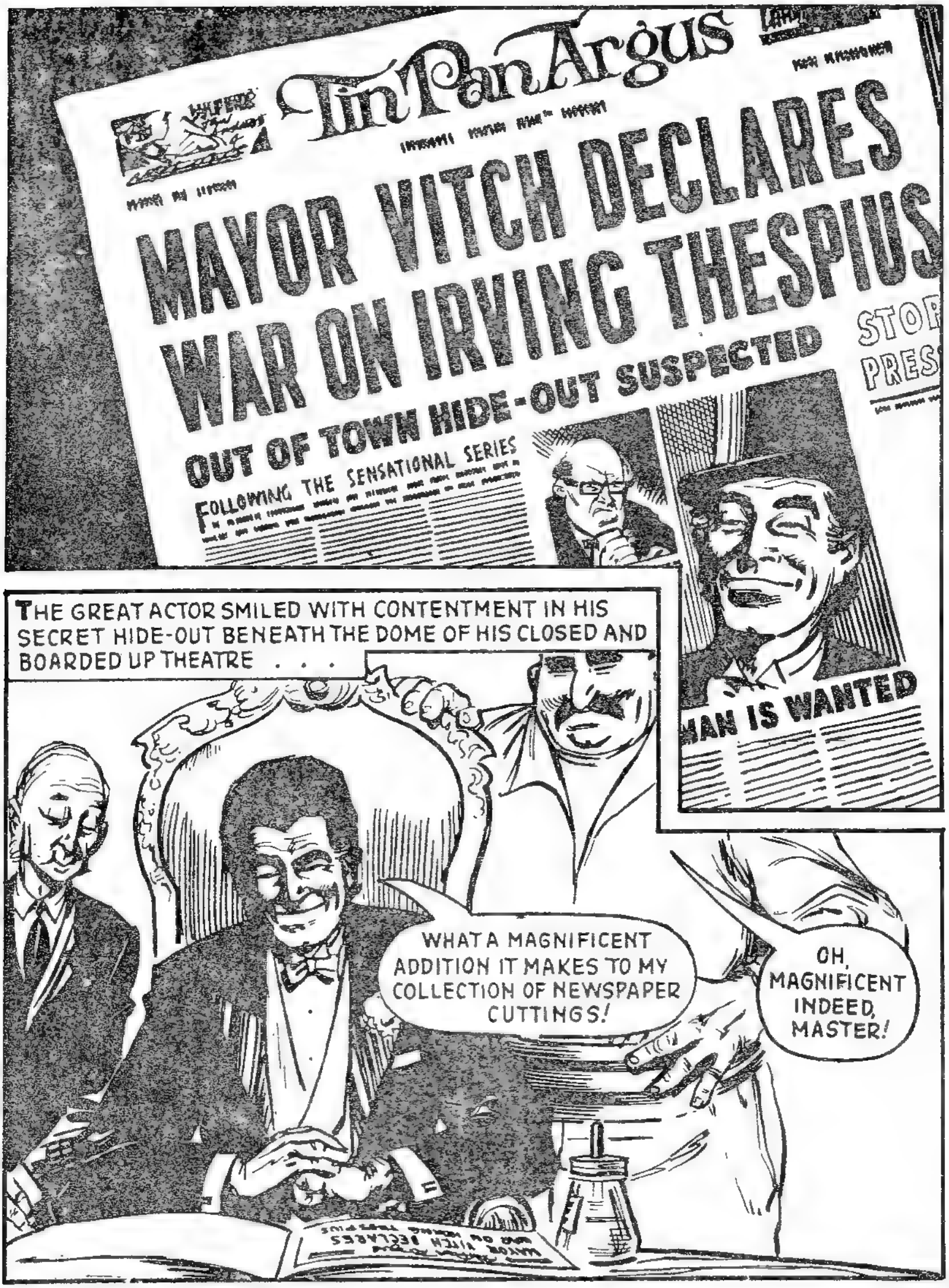


ALTHOUGH POLICE H.Q. WAS ONE OF THE MOST SECURELY WATCHED BUILDINGS IN THE WHOLE OF TINPAN, ENTRY FROM THE ROOF WAS MERELY A MATTER OF OPENING A DOOR!
THIS IS THE ROOM I SEEK, MINIM! WATCH THE CORRIDOR WHILST I PERFORM MY ACT!
PAY OFFICE
AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS FAME, THE GREAT THESPIUS HAD BEEN A MASTER OF LOCKS ... AND HE GREETED THE POLICE PAY-OFFICE SAFE WITH A LOFTY SNEER!
A SIMPLE LOCK THAT SHOULD PRESENT LITTLE DIFFICULTY TO A MAN OF MY UNDOUBTED TALENT!
BUT . . .
HOI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?

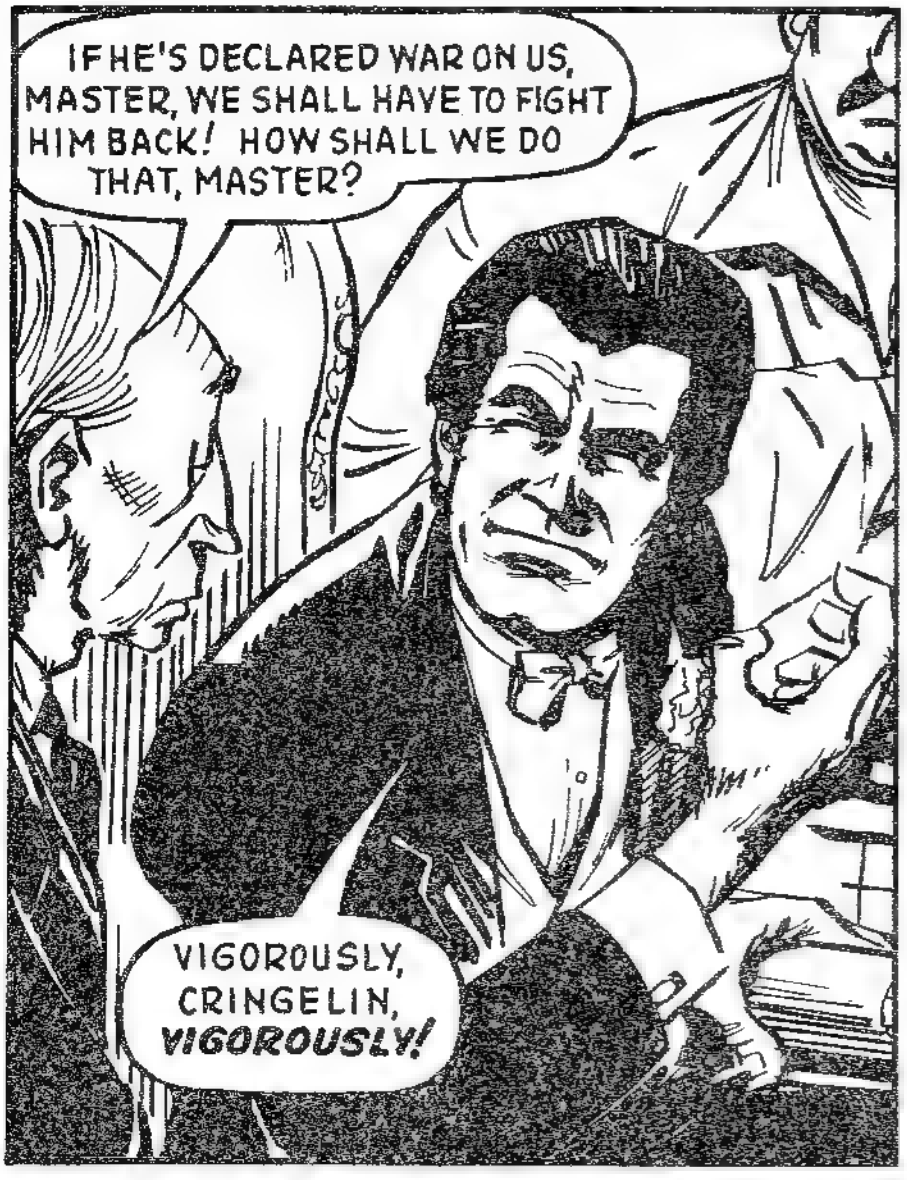
MINIM DODGED BACK INTO THE OFFICE . . . THE COP RUSHED IN LOOKING FOR THE DWARF.
WHERE'S HE GONE?
. . . AND THOUGHT HE'D FOUND A GIANT!
OOOOOUGH!
ALL CLEAR, MASTER!
GOOD WORK, MINIM! I AM NEARLY FINISHED HERE . . . THEY SEEM TO HAVE TAKEN FEW PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THEFT . . . BUT THEN I DON'T SUPPOSE THEY EXPECT ANYBODY TO ROB A POLICE STATION!
AND THEY LEFT, THE WAY THEY CAME . . . ONLY THIS TIME THEY HAD AN EXCITED AUDIENCE!
STOP, THIEF! STOP THOSE MEN!
HARK, MINIM, DO I HEAR LOUD ACCLAIM FOR OUR AUDACIOUS DEED OF DARING?

THE POLICE WERE STILL MILLING AROUND IN EMBARRASSED CONFUSION WHEN CRINGELIN HAD DRIVEN THE DESPERADOES MORE THAN HALFWAY HOME!
A GOODLY NIGHT'S TAKINGS, GENTLEMEN! IT SEEMS WE MADE OUR SURPRISE APPEARANCE THE NIGHT BEFORE POLICE PAY DAY!

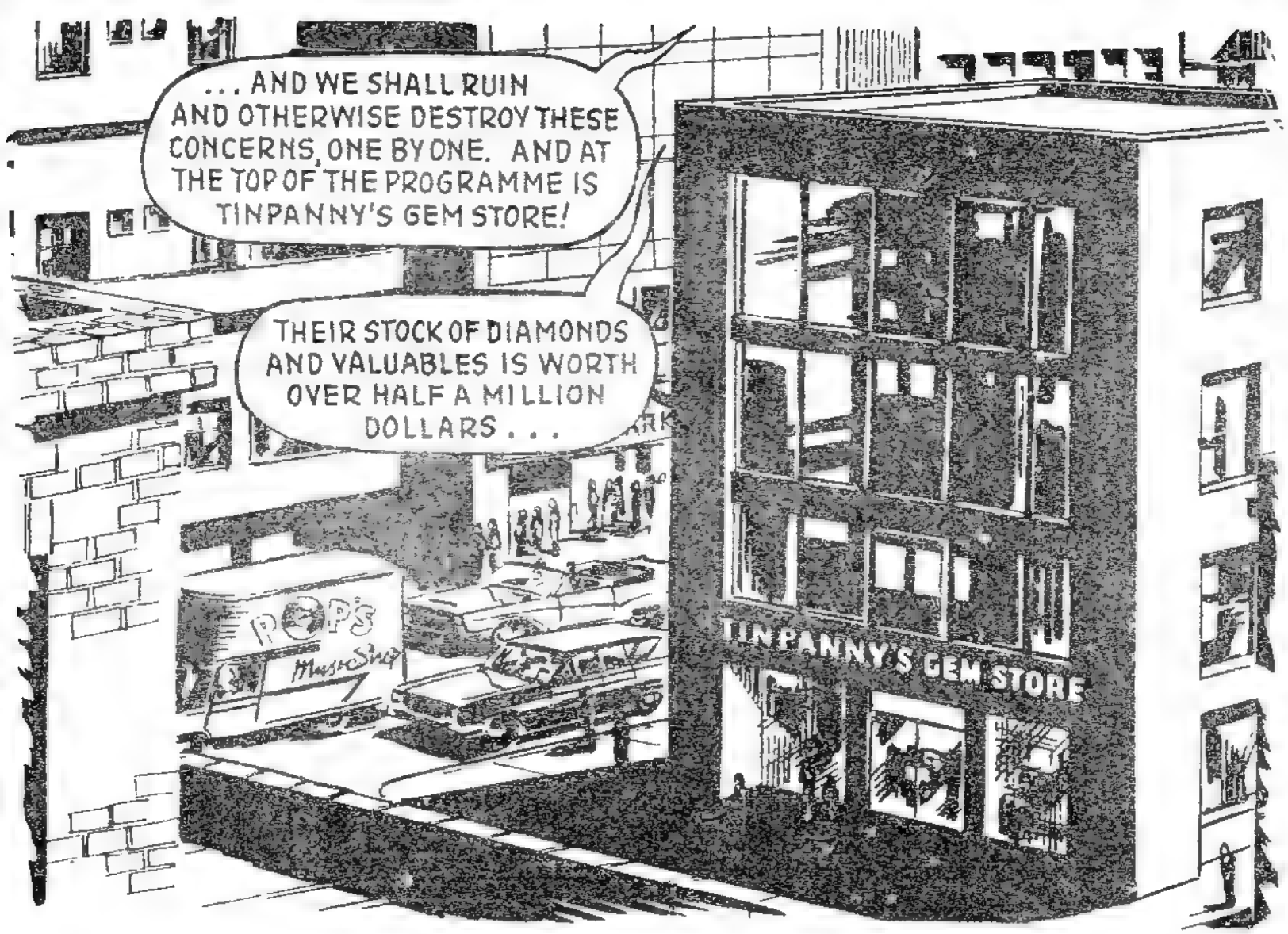

AND TO THESPIUS' FURTHER DELIGHT, NEWS OF THE ESCAPADE APPEARED BOLDLY IN THE NEXT MORNING'S NEWSPAPERS . . .
FRONT PAGE HEADLINES... FAME, AND PUBLIC NOTICE . . . SUCH IS RARE FOOD INDEED TO FEED A MAN'S PRIDE IN A JOB WELL DONE!
IT WILL MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO YOUR ALBUM, MASTER . . .
Tribune
DARING ROBBERY AT POLICE H.Q.
DRAGNET FOR IRVING THESPIUS
AND GANG


Tin Pan Argus
MAYOR VITCH DECLARES WAR ON IRVING THESPIUS
OUT OF TOWN HIDE-OUT SUSPECTED
FOLLOWING THE SENSATIONAL SERIES
STOR
PRES
AN IS WANTED
THE GREAT ACTOR SMILED WITH CONTENTMENT IN HIS SECRET HIDE-OUT BENEATH THE DOME OF HIS CLOSED AND BOARDED UP THEATRE . . .
WHAT A MAGNIFICENT ADDITION IT MAKES TO MY COLLECTION OF NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS!
OH, MAGNIFICENT INDEED, MASTER!

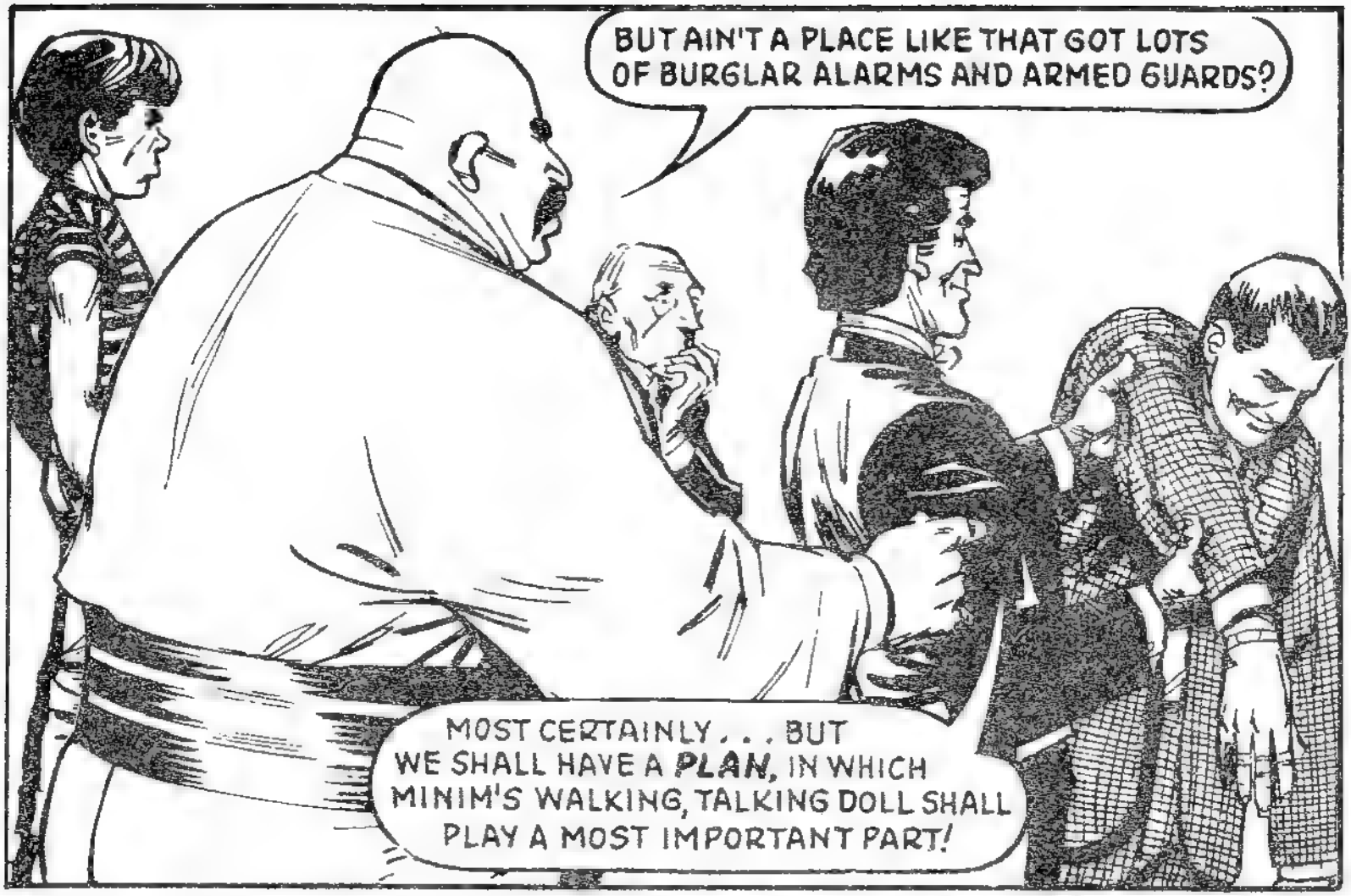
BUT THERE WAS ONE SMALL NOTE OF DOUBT . . . AND IT CAME FROM THE SMALLEST MEMBER OF THAT ODD GANG, MINIM!
BUT IF VITCH MEANS WHAT HE SAYS . . . HE'LL HUNT US OUT AND DESTROY US!
HAVE NO FEAR OF THAT, DEAR MINIM! HE DOES NOT EVEN KNOW WHERE WE ARE! HIS LOUTS HAVE ALREADY SEARCHED THIS BUILDING AND FAILED TO FIND US . . . HE THINKS WE LURK LIKE PARIAHS IN THE WILDERNESS BEYOND THE TOWN!

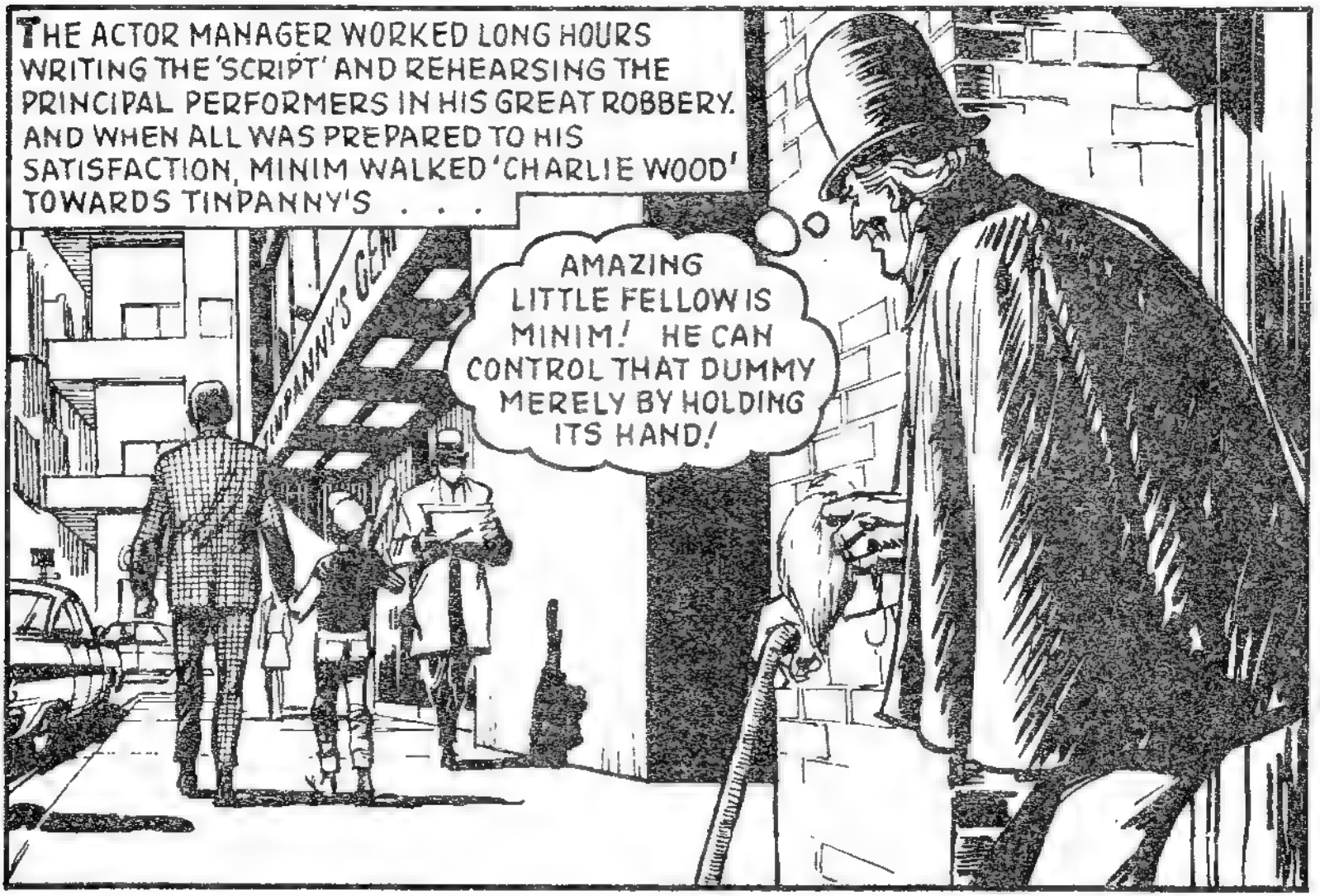

IF HE'S DECLARED WAR ON US, MASTER, WE SHALL HAVE TO FIGHT HIM BACK! HOW SHALL WE DO THAT, MASTER?
VIGOROUSLY, CRINGELIN, VIGOROUSLY!

AND AS OUR SECRET WEAPON, I HAVE HERE A LIST OF BUSINESSES...
. . . IN WHICH MAYOR HERMAN VITCH HAS FINANCIAL INTEREST! I...ER... PURLOINED THIS DOCUMENT DURING MY LAST VISIT TO HIS OFFICE . . .


. . . AND WE SHALL RUIN AND OTHERWISE DESTROY THESE CONCERNS, ONE BY ONE. AND AT THE TOP OF THE PROGRAMME IS TINPANNY'S GEM STORE!
THEIR STOCK OF DIAMONDS AND VALUABLES IS WORTH OVER HALF A MILLION DOLLARS . . .
POP'S
Music Shop
TINPANNY'S GEM STORE

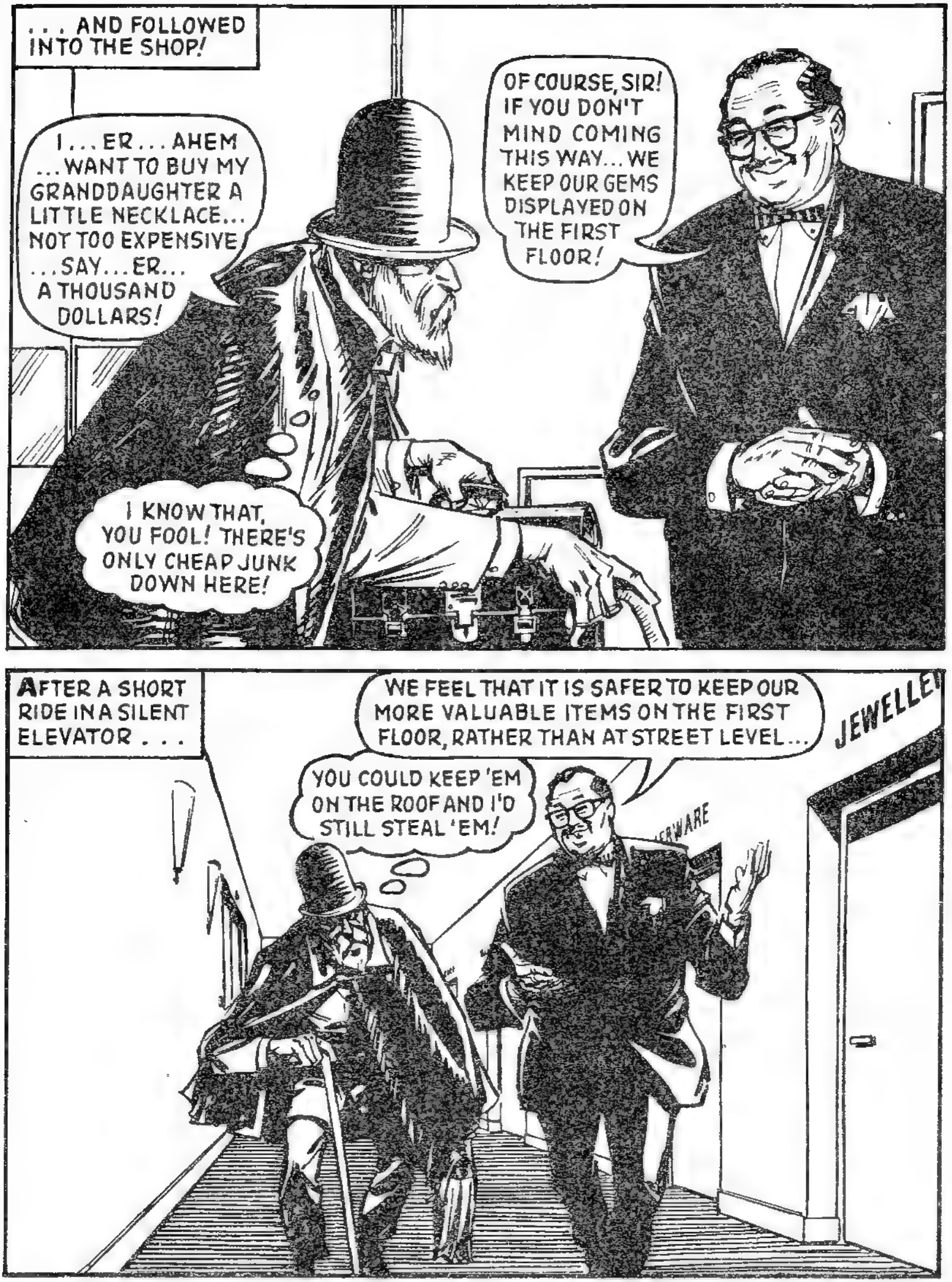
A KING'S RANSOM INDEED, CRINGELIN . . . AND IT SHALL BE OURS!


BUT AIN'T A PLACE LIKE THAT GOT LOTS OF BURGLAR ALARMS AND ARMED GUARDS?
MOST CERTAINLY . . . BUT WE SHALL HAVE A PLAN, IN WHICH MINIM'S WALKING, TALKING DOLL SHALL PLAY A MOST IMPORTANT PART!


THE ACTOR MANAGER WORKED LONG HOURS WRITING THE 'SCRIPT' AND REHEARSING THE PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS IN HIS GREAT ROBBERY. AND WHEN ALL WAS PREPARED TO HIS SATISFACTION, MINIM WALKED 'CHARLIE WOOD' TOWARDS TINPANNY'S . . .
TINPANNY'S GEM
AMAZING LITTLE FELLOW IS MINIM! HE CAN CONTROL THAT DUMMY MERELY BY HOLDING ITS HAND!

THE DWARF WAS AN EXPERT VENTRILOQUIST, AND NO ONE REALISED THAT IT WAS ACTUALLY HE WHO WAS DOING THE TALKING...
I WISH TO BUY MY WIFE A RING FOR HER BIRTHDAY ...AN EXPENSIVE ONE!
YES, SIR! WILL YOU COME WITH ME, SIR?
M

THESPIUS RAPIDLY COMPLETED HIS DISGUISE . . .

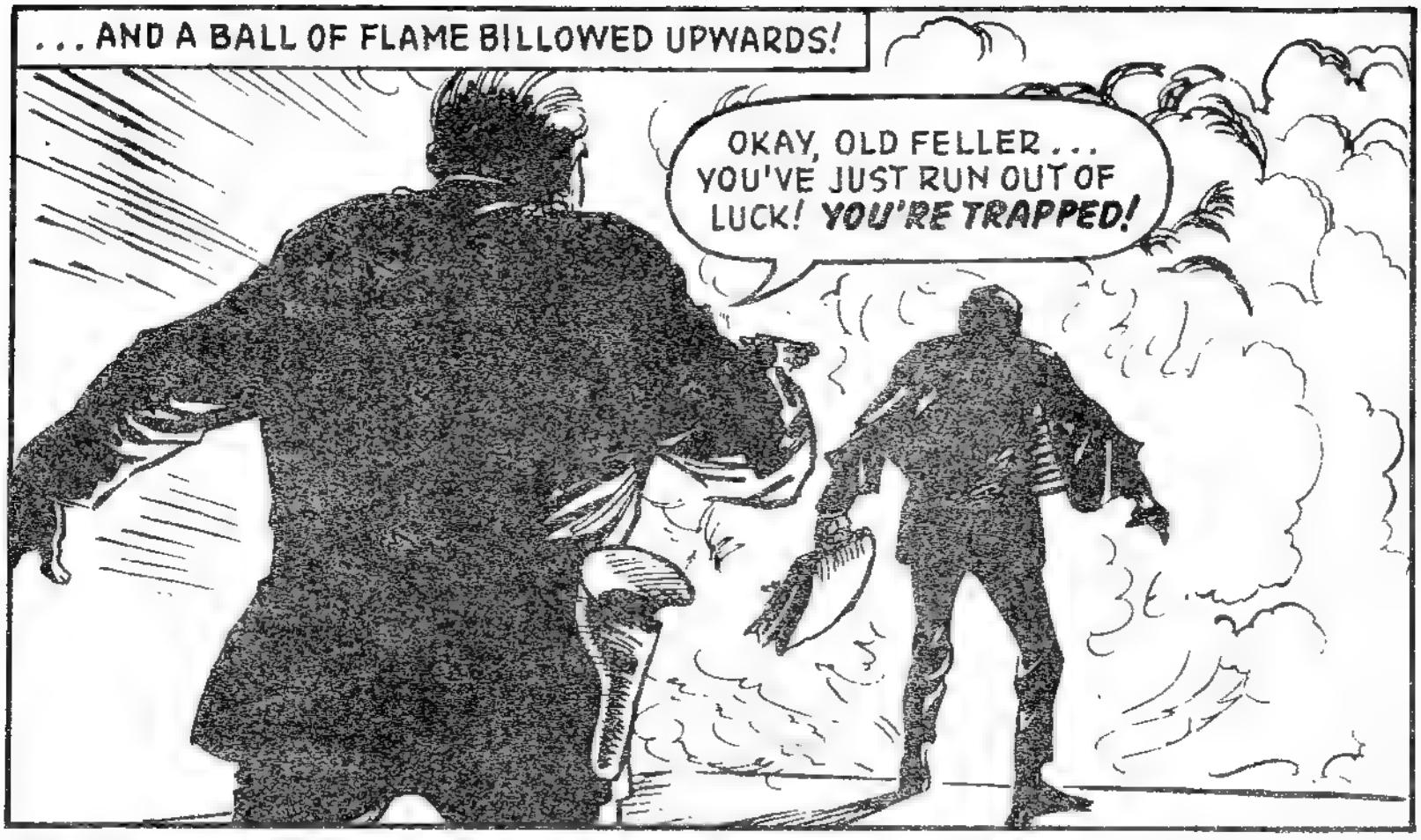

. . . AND FOLLOWED INTO THE SHOP!
I . . . ER . . . AHEM . . . WANT TO BUY MY GRANDDAUGHTER A LITTLE NECKLACE . . . NOT TOO EXPENSIVE . . . SAY . . . ER . . . A THOUSAND DOLLARS!
OF COURSE, SIR! IF YOU DON'T MIND COMING THIS WAY . . . WE KEEP OUR GEMS DISPLAYED ON THE FIRST FLOOR!
I KNOW THAT, YOU FOOL! THERE'S ONLY CHEAP JUNK DOWN HERE!
AFTER A SHORT RIDE IN A SILENT ELEVATOR . . .
WE FEEL THAT IT IS SAFER TO KEEP OUR MORE VALUABLE ITEMS ON THE FIRST FLOOR, RATHER THAN AT STREET LEVEL . . .
YOU COULD KEEP 'EM ON THE ROOF AND I'D STILL STEAL 'EM!
JEWELLE

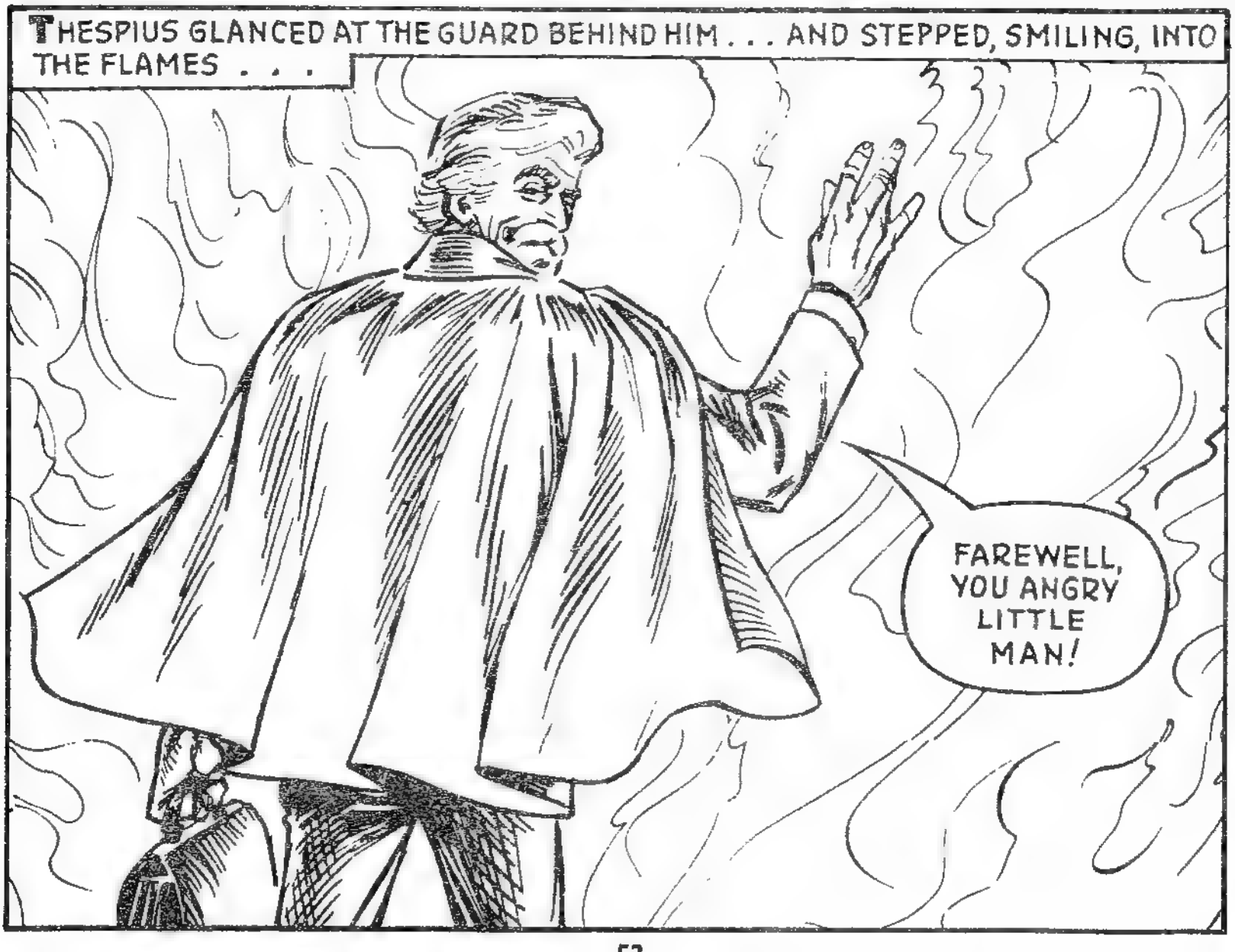
HOW IS *THIS*, SIR?
CHARMING, YOUNG MAN!
AND WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE BOY?
MINIM'S ANSWER WAS A CRACK ON THE HEAD!
OOOOH!

MINIM'S NEXT TASK WAS TO OPEN ALL THE LOCKED SHOW CASES . . .
OW...OOOOOW!
DRI-I-I-I-I
STOP HIM! STOP HIM! HE'S SETTING OFF ALL THE ALARMS!
THEY CAME AT MINIM FROM OPPOSITE SIDES . . . AND IT WAS THEN THAT 'CHARLIE WOOD' STRUCK OUT!
ULP!
AN ADMIRABLE DIVERSION, MINIM!
OOOOOUF!

AND AS MINIM LED HIS PURSUERS DOWN THE FRONT STAIRS TO THE SHOP BELOW, THESPIUS SWEPT INTO ACTION . . .
H'M, THIS SHOULD MAKE A FAIR RETURN FOR A DAY OF FOUL PLAY!
AND AFTER CAUSING SUITABLE HAVOC DOWNSTAIRS, MINIM RUSHED OUT INTO THE STREET . . .
DRI-I-I-I-I-I-NG!
OOOOUGH!
Sentrics
OUF!
CLANGGGG!

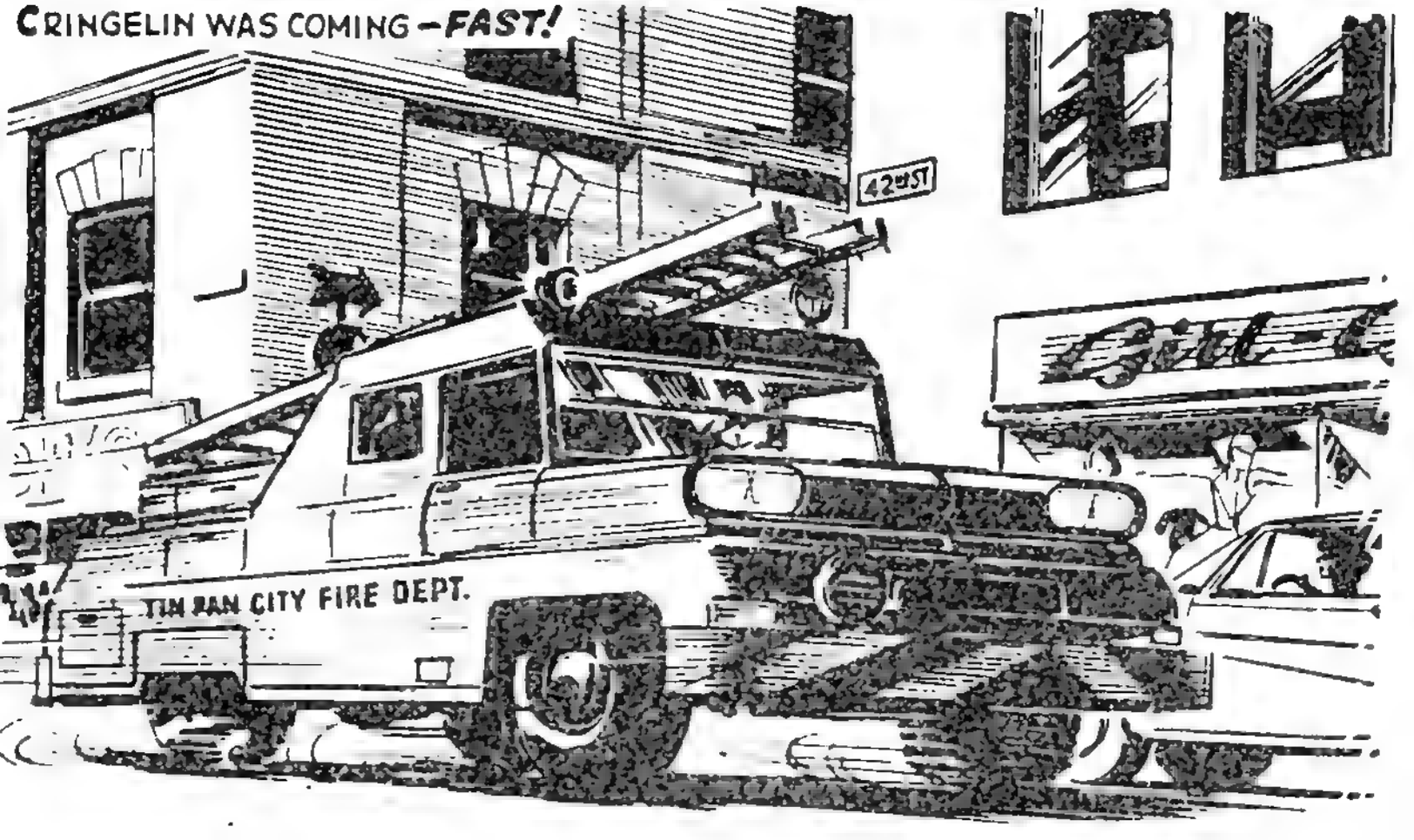
NO ONE EVEN SUSPECTED THAT ROBBERY WAS AFOOT UNTIL ONE OF THE GUARDS RETURNED TO THE GEM ROOM . . .
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
AMONGST OTHER ITEMS, I AM TAKING MY . . .
. . . LEAVE!
ULK!
THESPIUS RAN TOWARDS THE BACK STAIRS, BUT A SHOUT CAME FROM BELOW . . .
FIRE! FIRE!


. . . AND A BALL OF FLAME BILLOWED UPWARDS!
OKAY, OLD FELLER . . . YOU'VE JUST RUN OUT OF LUCK! YOU'RE TRAPPED!

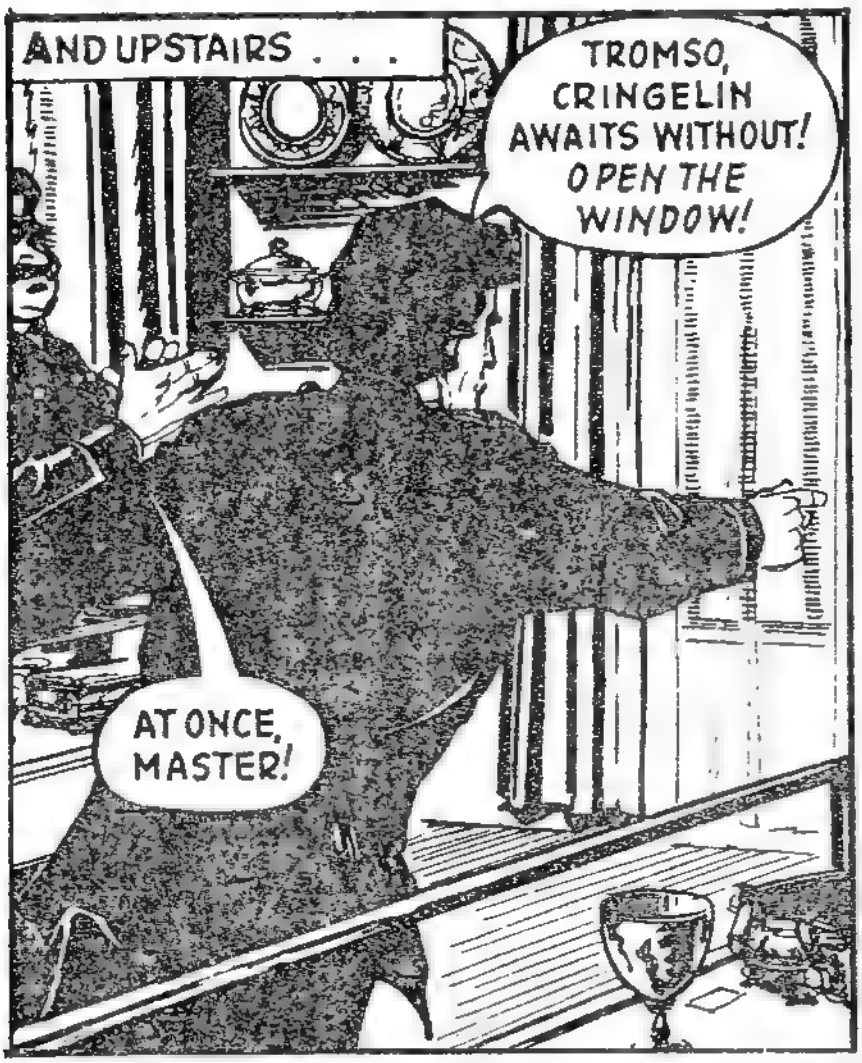

THESPIUS GLANCED AT THE GUARD BEHIND HIM . . . AND STEPPED, SMILING, INTO THE FLAMES . . .
FAREWELL, YOU ANGRY LITTLE MAN!

THE GREAT THESPIUS IS FIRE-PROOF!
BEYOND THAT WALL OF "FLAME" THE GREAT THESPIUS REMOVED HIS DISGUISE...
A SPECTACULAR PERFORMANCE WITH OUR FIRE-MAKER, TROMSO ...AND RIGHT ON CUE! MY CHEMICAL FORMULA FOR "COLD FLAME" WORKS SUPERBLY!
THANKS, MASTER! YOUR CHANGE OF COSTUME IS OVER THERE!
MOMENTS LATER, THESPIUS AND STRONGMAN TROMSO HURRIED BACK UP THE FLIGHT OF STAIRS...
I'LL JUST PUT A TOUCH OF "FIRE" AROUND THE LIFT AND STAIRS AT THE OTHER END, THEN NO-ONE WILL COME TO DISTURB US!
OH, VERY DEFT, TROMSO!

THESPIUS PAUSED TO ADMIRE THE DISPLAY ALCOVES FILLED WITH GOLD AND SILVER PLATE . . . THEN . . .
AHA! I BELIEVE I DO HEAR THE FAITHFUL CRINGELIN APPROACHING!

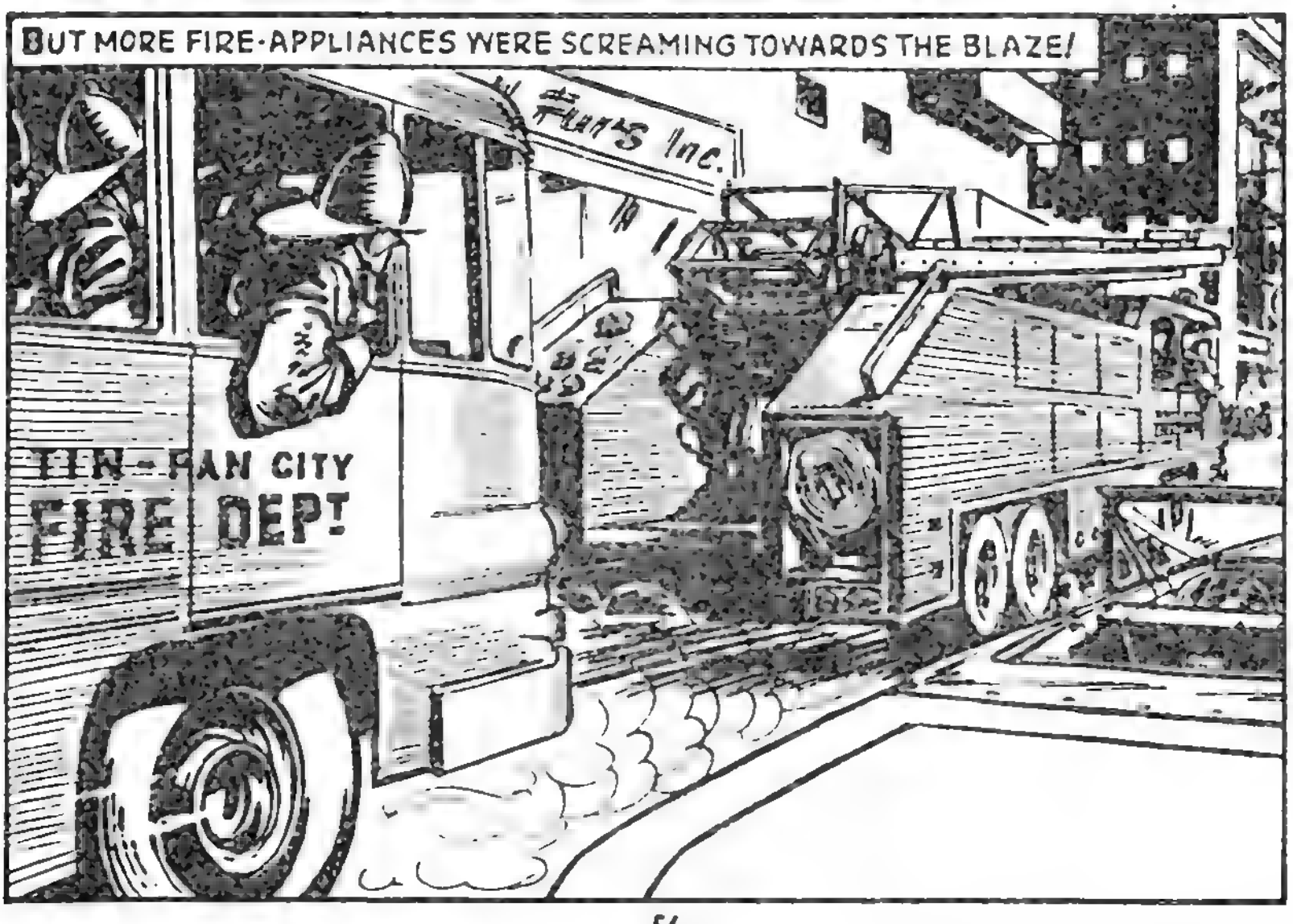

CRINGELIN WAS COMING – FAST!
42nd ST
TIN PAN CITY FIRE DEPT.

GET BACK... MOVE BACK...
ONLY ONE FIREMAN?
TINPANNY'S GEM STORE
MOVE ALONG THERE, MISTER...
IT'S A NEW SYSTEM WE'RE WORKING... THE OTHERS ARE ON THEIR WAY!


AND UPSTAIRS . . .
TROMSO, CRINGELIN AWAITS WITHOUT! OPEN THE WINDOW!
AT ONCE, MASTER!

TO OBEY THIS SIMPLE COMMAND, THE STRONGMAN NEEDED ALL HIS FANTASTIC STRENGTH!
NGGGGAA-AAAAGH!

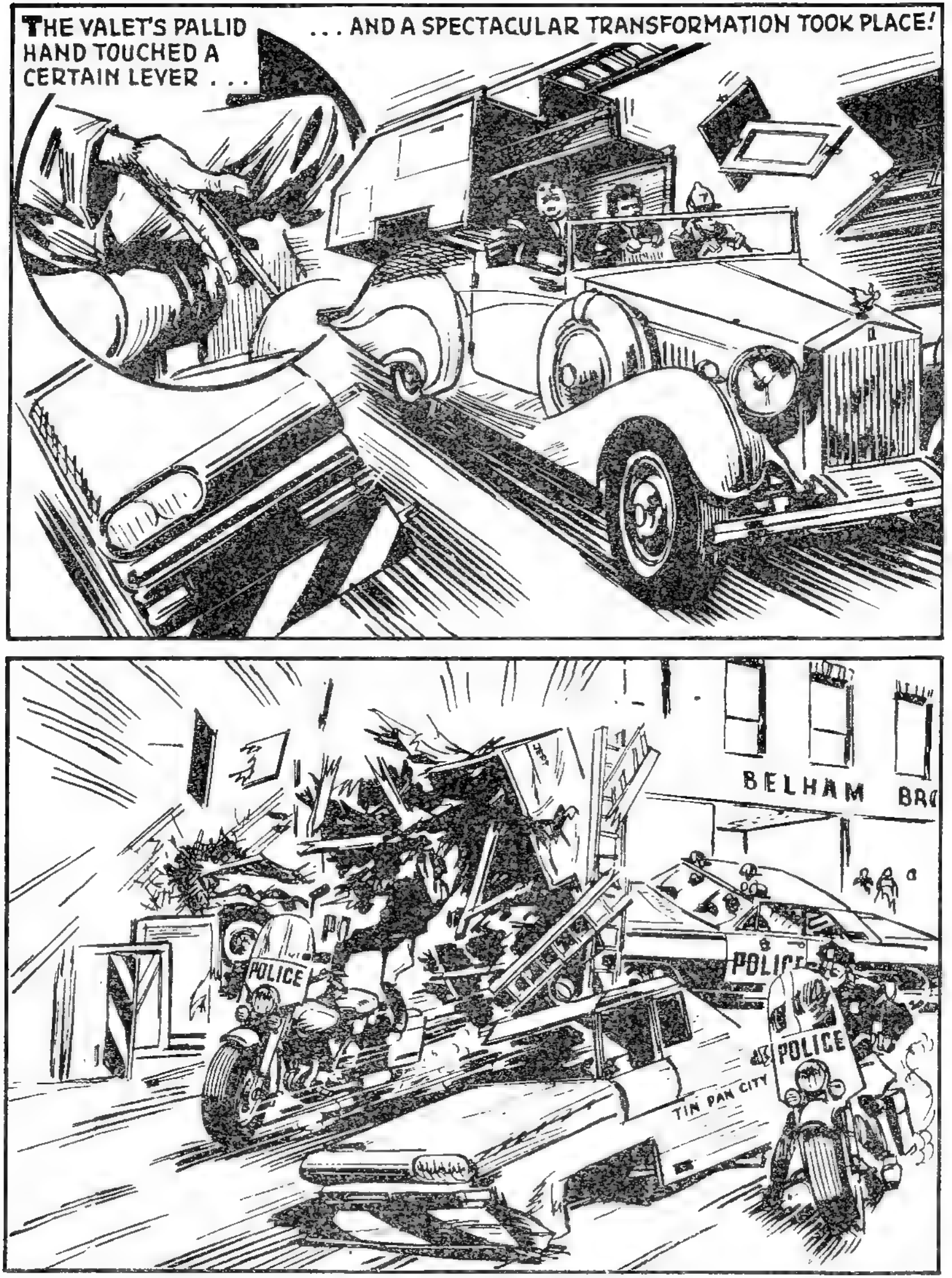
THEN ALL WAS SET FOR THE GREAT RESCUE OPERATION!
WHO ARE THOSE GUARDS? I DON'T RECOGNISE 'EM!
DOES IT MATTER? THOSE GUYS ARE HEROES... RISKING THEIR LIVES TO SAVE THAT STUFF!


BUT MORE FIRE-APPLIANCES WERE SCREAMING TOWARDS THE BLAZE!
Flints Inc.
TIN-PAN CITY
FIRE DEPT

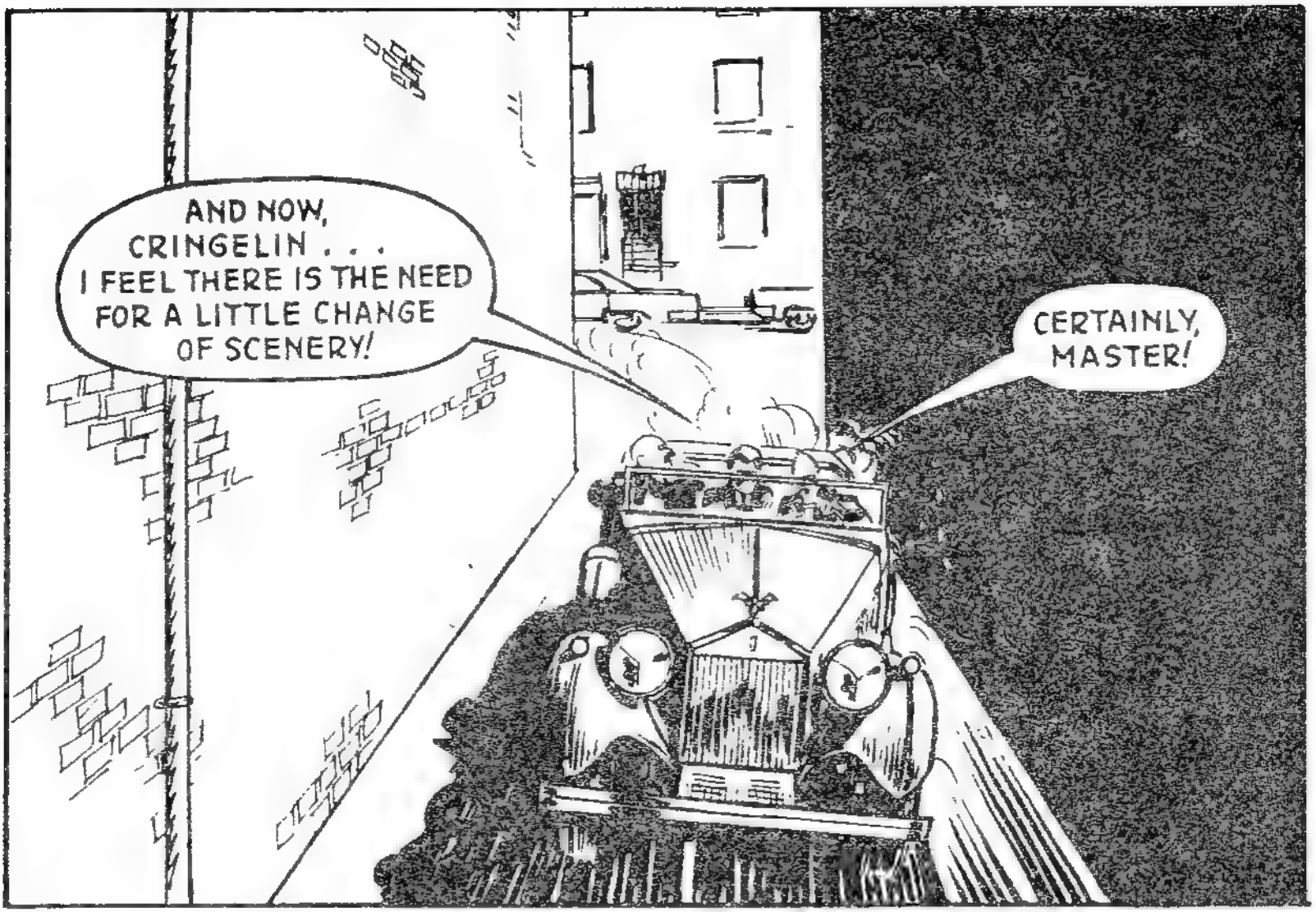
SAY! WHO'S THAT GUY? HE DON'T WORK FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT!

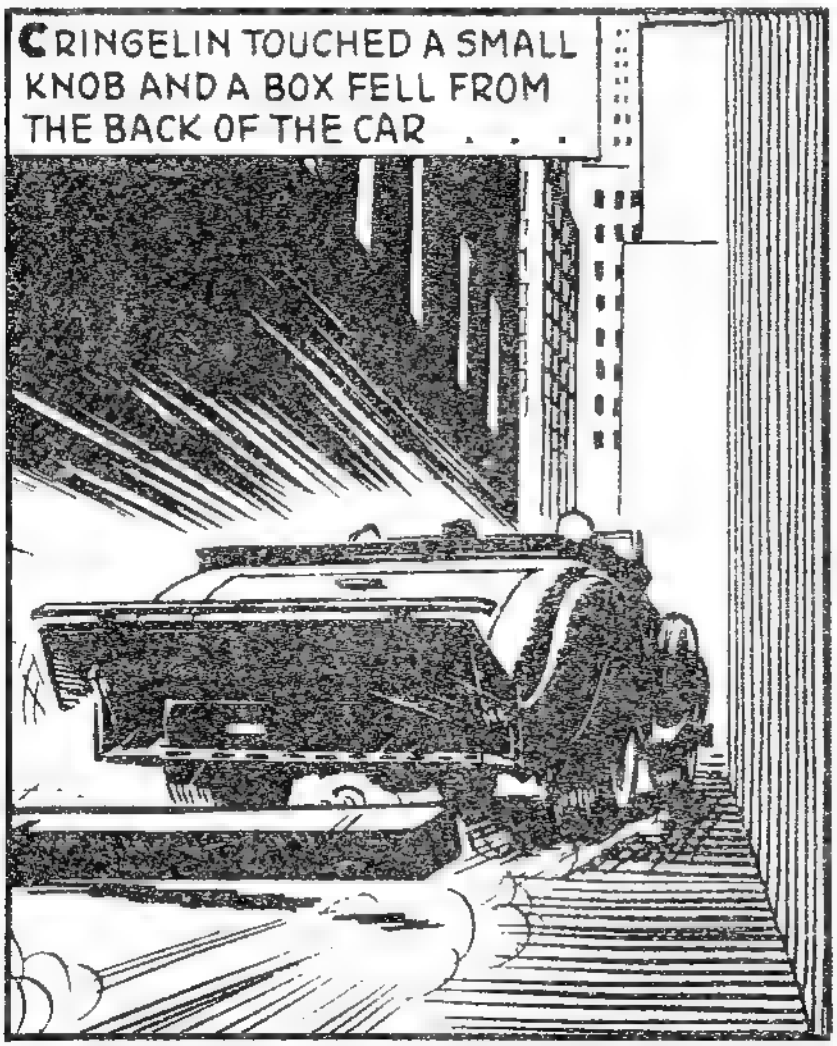
TIME, I THINK, FOR OUR EXIT, TROMSO!

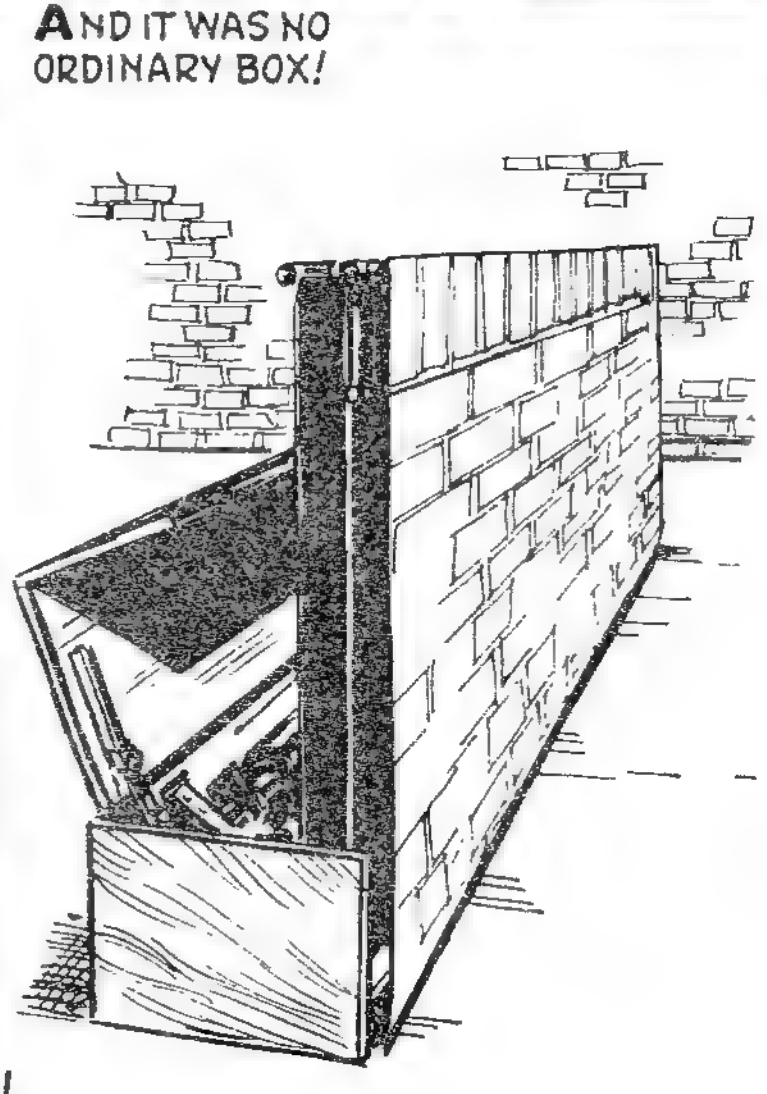
THAT'S THESPIUS... PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE!
AND FROM THAT MOMENT THE CHASE WAS ON!
DRIVE, CRINGELIN... DRIVE!
POLICE
POLICE
THEY'RE GAINING ON US... THEY'RE GONNA CATCH US!
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, CRINGELIN... A CHANGE OF SCENE IS CALLED FOR!
YES, MASTER!

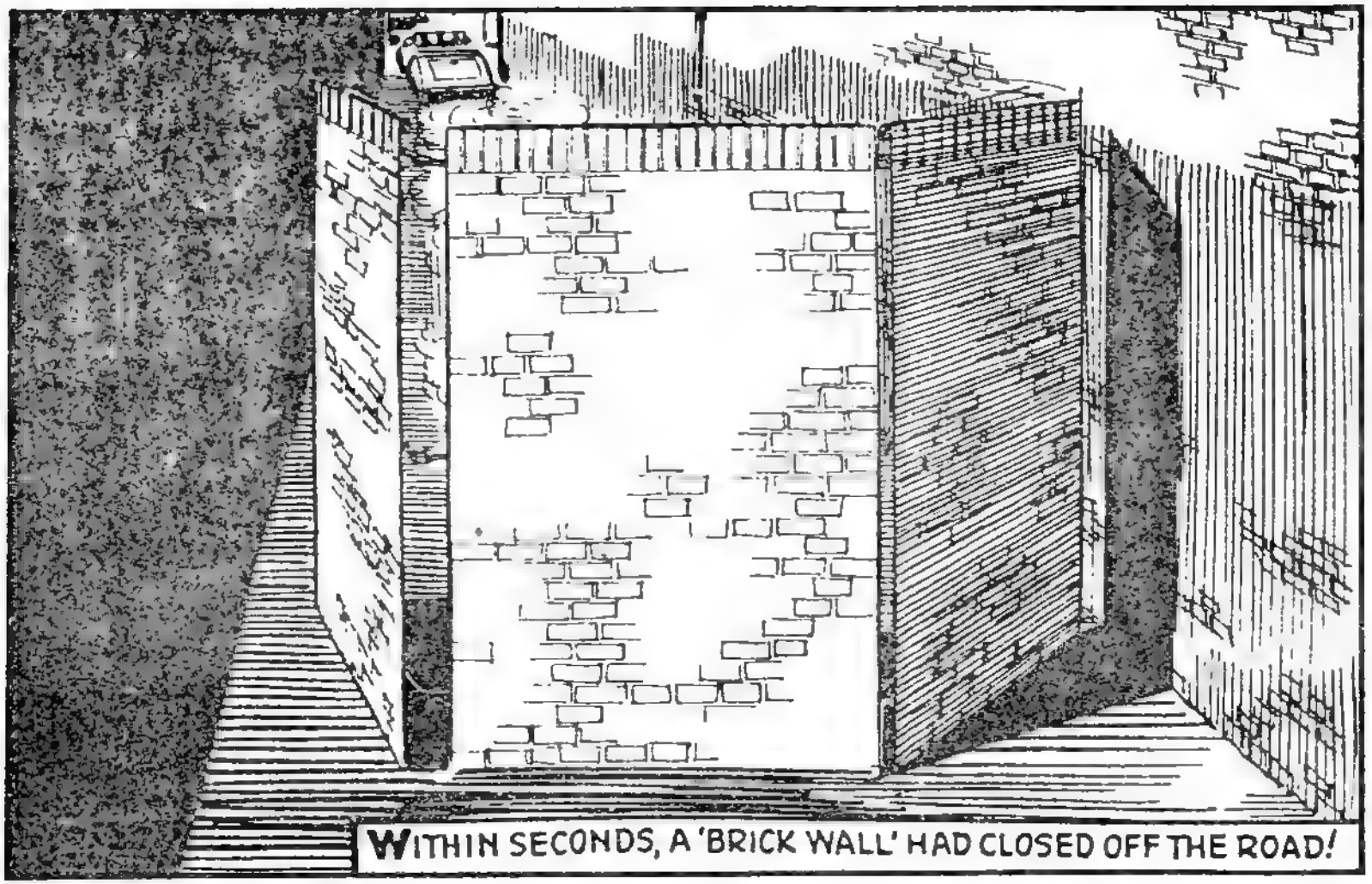

THE VALET'S PALLID HAND TOUCHED A CERTAIN LEVER . . .
. . . AND A SPECTACULAR TRANSFORMATION TOOK PLACE!
BELHAM
POLICE
POLICE
POLICE
TIN PAN CITY

THE GREAT THESPIUS SMILED THE WIDE SMILE OF SUCCESS!
HO, HO, HO! THOSE COPS SURE TOOK A TUMBLE!
A FINE CLIMAX TO END OUR DAY'S MOST PROFITABLE ADVENTURE! HOME, CRINGELIN . . . AND DON'T SPARE THE HORSEPOWER!
BUT . . .
THERE'S A ROAD-BLOCK AHEAD!
AND THERE'S A COP RIGHT ON OUR TAIL . . . WE'RE TRAPPED BETWEEN THE TWO!
A PLAGUE UPON THEM . . . THIS IS A DIFFICULT SCENE, AND NO MISTAKE!


AND NOW, CRINGELIN . . . I FEEL THERE IS THE NEED FOR A LITTLE CHANGE OF SCENERY!
CERTAINLY, MASTER!


CRINGELIN TOUCHED A SMALL KNOB AND A BOX FELL FROM THE BACK OF THE CAR . . .


AND IT WAS NO ORDINARY BOX!


WITHIN SECONDS, A 'BRICK WALL' HAD CLOSED OFF THE ROAD!

AND WHEN THE COPS ARRIVED...
WHERE DID THEY GO?

BUT THIS IS CRAZY! THAT CAR JUST COULDN'T HAVE VANISHED INTO THIN . . .
...AAAA-AAAAIR!
SO THAT'S HOW THEY DID IT! HELD US UP JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GET CLEAR AWAY!
ANOTHER DANG FOOL THEATRICAL TRICK!

LATER . . .
FELLOW PLAYERS, I MUST COMPLIMENT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU UPON THIS AFTERNOON'S FAULTLESS PERFORMANCE!
MAYOR VITCH SURE MET HIS MATCH IN YOU, BOSS!
IRVING THESPIUS SMILED WITH SATISFACTION WHEN HE THOUGHT OF THE HEADLINES TOMORROW'S PAPERS WOULD GIVE HIM. . . HIS PLANS HAD WORKED PERFECTLY.

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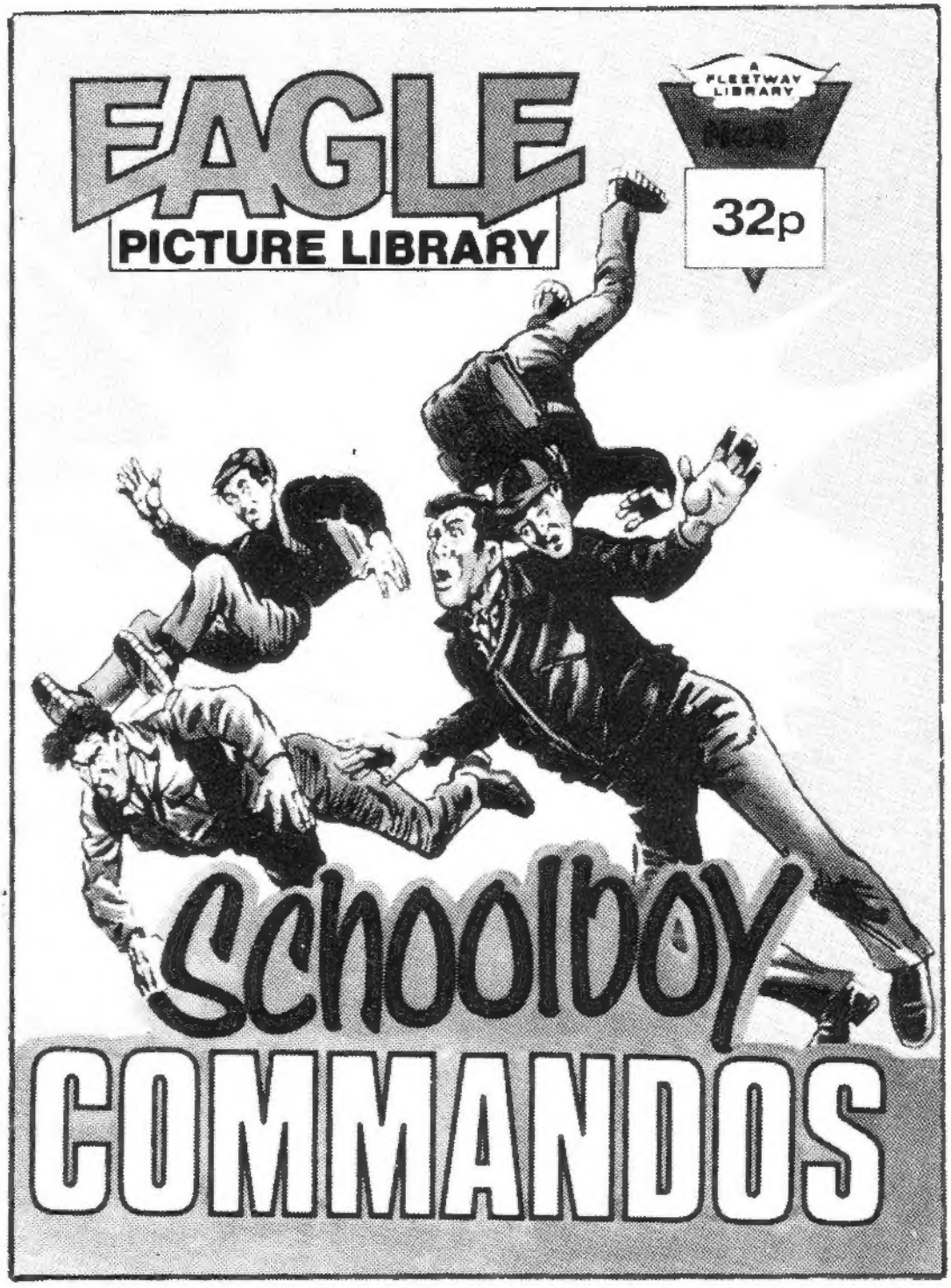

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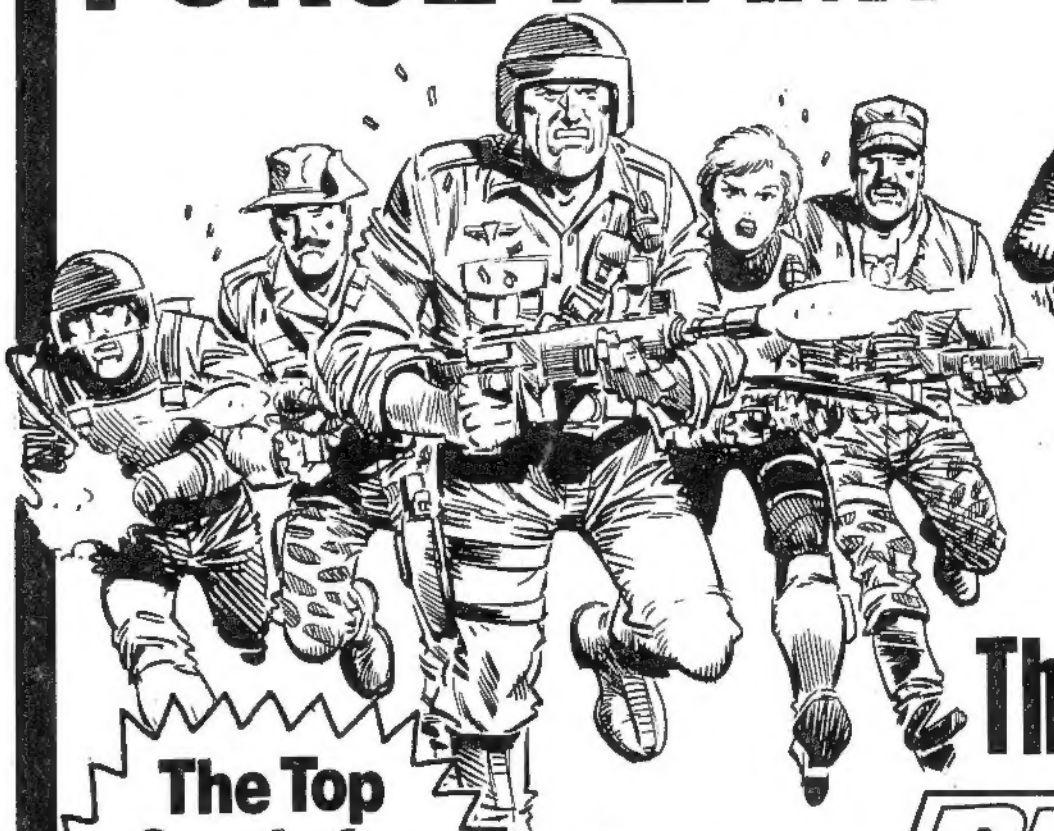

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